

### Contents

#### Retro

#### 14 THE FREY ARCHIVE

Roger Kean talks to Oliver Frey about the thinking behind Issue #5 of SEGA FORCE Magazine.

#### 16 WING COMMANDER

Jonathan Hamblin dons his Wing Commander flight jacket, and goes into space battle.

#### 24 GAMES CHART FLASHBACK

Colin and James from Lets Talk Retro look back to September 1998 and the Nintendo 64 charts.

#### 26 THE STORY BEHIND.

Philip and Andrew Oliver talk to Chris Wilkins on the release of The Oliver Twins Collection on the Evercade.

#### 30 PACMAN HANDHELD

Could a cheap handheld live up to the experience of a full blown arcade cabinet?

#### 34 TRANSFORMER CONSOLES

A Sony PlayStation and Sega Megadrive Transformer — every retro collector should have these.

#### 36 TO SIMPLY POINT

James Woodcock reminisces on a time when Point and Click Adventures were common place.

#### 38 ASOBITECH

Quang is not just a collector, he has written a few games also in his time. Check out his latest title.

#### 54 MSX

The Retro Shed's Barry Morse goes back to XMAS 1984, and the start of his love affair with the MSX computer.

#### **60** THE FREY ARCHIVE

Roger Kean talks to Oliver Frey about the thinking behind Issue #88 of CRASH Magazine.

#### **66 TOP 10 VECTREX HOMEBREW**

The Vectrex is still going strong — Mat Allen looks at the top 10 homebrew games for the system.

#### 78 POKEMON — GUIDE FOR UNINITIATED

Ryan Coleman is a huge fan of the Pokémon franchise — here is his guide for all things Pikachu.

#### **88 JAGUAR HOMEBREW WITH CLAWS**

The Jaguar has a thriving scene with many new games being released all the time. Fusion investigates...

#### 91 OCEAN'S 11

We asked Simon Butler to think back on his Ocean Software days and give us his favourite Ocean titles.

#### 104 TERRIBLE GAMES

Stuart Ashen picks another terrible game off his long list — C'mon boys, boys, boys, let's take a look.

#### 114 BASKET BALL CLASSICS

DJ Slopes follows the story of two Tecmo Super Bowl fans and their journey in making a basketball game.

#### 120 DOOM 64

The Nintendo 64 had its very own version of Doom. Arron Davis looks back at the classic.

#### 124 JOYSTICK MADNESS

Colin Bell takes a look at some more joysticks — these are the handheld ones, the ones that had no suckers.

#### Indie

#### 6 HERO CORE — REVIEW

Simon Butler remembers a time when his family TV was Black and White — Hero Core sure does take him back!

#### 82 LITTLE NIGHTMARES— REVIEW

A scary game about a little girl in a yellow rain coat trying to escape the Maw.

#### **Current Gen**

#### 10 BROTHERS — A TALE OF TWO SONS

Simon Butler takes two brothers on an adventure — what a tale there is to tell!

#### Other

#### 21 HEAVEN & HELL

The Gamecube was Nintendo's first CD based console — after the N64 they had something to prove.

#### 22 TANK COMMAND

Take charge of a squadron of tanks and head out into the battlefield to destroy the enemey.

#### 44 BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

Toy Polloi introduces us to the Battlestar Galactica range of toys.

#### 47 I AM GAMES ANIMAL

The Games Animal returns, and this time he tells us what his favourite game is.

#### 62 CROSSFIRE

Anyone see my ball bearings? They have gone missing again, so please be aware!

#### 72 PENNY RACERS

Toy Polloi needs to spend a penny — maybe check out the Penny Racers first Mr Polloi?

#### 84 ROLAND TO THE RESCUE

Roland Perry was drafted in to rescue the launch of the Amstrad CPC — did his presence turn things around?

#### 100 Wabi-Sabi

What does Toy Polloi do with broken toys? Throw them away? No, he repairs them.

#### 110 RETRO MAN CAVE

Neil Thomas goes cruisin down the M4 in Atari's Hard Drivin'

#### 112 OCTAV1US

Chubby Gristle — a portly chap with a big nose. He appeared in a game — Octav1us looks back at the game.

## Editor's Note

Incredibly a year has gone past, and you have our second Fusion Annual in your hands. We had some amazing feedback on our first and we hope you enjoy this year's – it sure has a huge variety of content for you to read and is now 132 pages – an increase of a full 12 pages from our first outing.

It has been a tough year, and I really do hope our Fusion magazine has kept you entertained during a time when many have looked for activities to keep themselves busy and occupied. We love creating Fusion and there is so much to cover – the ideas for Fusion Specials are endless, and we believe you will find content in the magazine that you will find nowhere else.

We have some familar names once again providing content this year such as Simon

Butler, The Oliver Twins and Dave Perry. In addition, please welcome Stuart Ashen and DJ Slopes to the team.

Enjoy the Annual,

Chris Wilkins

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Roger Kean, Ryan Coleman, Mat Allen,
Aron Davies, Oliver Twins, DJ Slopes, Octavlus, Quang.





## FUSION

Game : Empire Strikes Back

Year : 1982 System : Atari 2600

With my formative years being in the 80s, the Atari 2600 sort of passed me by — a Grandstand pong type game was my first foray into TV gaming followed by the ZX Spectrum in 1983.

I remember seeing the Woody in Argos catalogues each Christmas as I ticked those toys I wanted Santa to bring me on the big day and curiosity drew me to the games that were available for the system.

Being a late fan to the Star Wars hype machine of the time, it was The Empire Strikes Back game that created the most intrigue through its fancy box art emblazoned with the Star Wars name and a huge AT-AT being attacked by a Snow Speeder. It was many years later though that I finally managed to play this game — probably through emulation first and then when I owned my first 2600 console a little later on.

The game is similar in style to the popular Defender arcade game though for this game you are flying a Snow Speeder over the Hoth landscape holding off AT-AT walkers intent on destroying the Rebel's Echo Base. Repeated shots to the head of a Walker will see its ultimate demise but there so many more ready to take its place — the game ends if five of your lives are lost, or a Walker reaches and destroys the base.

Hugely simplistic graphics and sound effects still conjure up a heart thumping gaming experience for this Star Wars fan.



#### SIMON BUTLER GETS **OUT HIS BLACK AND** WHITE TV AND GOES ALL HEROIC ON US

The vast majority of the titles that come across my radar are retro-influenced, in fact I have gone on record somewhere (my podcast on RetroGamingRoundup) as saying that all games are retro if they emulate a style or mechanic from elsewhere.

This being said, my review today is about as retro as they come. I encountered Hero Core when it was first released a decade back and took to it like a duck to pixelated water regardless of the fact that I had to play using the keyboard.

Now this is normally the kiss of death for any product where I'm concerned, mostly because my slenderman style fingers have never been up to the challenge of staying on the correct keys when called upon to exercise precise movements in gaming.

This is my pathetic excuse for being crap at games that don't call for a joystick or controller.

But strangely enough, I

stuck with this little rascal until my digits were raw and I had eventually got the hang of even the most simple manoeuvre.

Flip Hero, our single colour cosmic commando, or whatever he may be, is out to finally hunt down and destroy the evil Robot Lord Tetron in the heart of his diabolical lair and put an end to a war that rages eternally within this mechanical mastermind.

Stuff and nonsense aside, Herocore is a challenging little two colour romp that will take most old-school gamers back to their youth and conjure up games such as Jetpack as you glide Flip around the maze-like

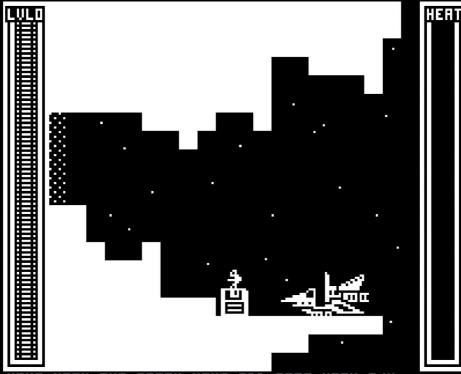












HOVE WITH THE ARROW KEYS AND FIRE WITH Z/X PRESS SPACE TO TOGGLE AUTOFIRE.

screens, avoiding a vast array of scurrilous nasties and a hail of bullets to boot.

The graphics are workmanlike at best with little detail in anything other than the opposition. This draws the attention to what is going on within the gameplay 'arena', which is not a bad thing, because there are more than enough bullets and oncoming aliens at times to contend with.

Flip can fire left and right while his enemies have no such limitations, the combination of which proves

to be quite the conundrum at times, but fun regardless.

Power-ups as always are acquired along your way from battling several mini-bosses, all of which require markedly different modes of attack and/or defence. Defence basically means not being hit by the hail of fire that sometimes seems to fill every available position of safety.

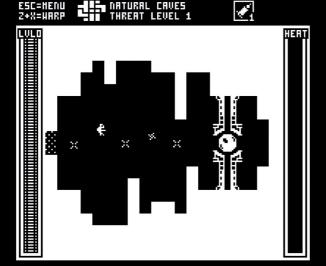
Assorted doodads need to be discovered and collected to unlock the inner sanctum of the dark robotic despot and this calls for every slick move your digits can provide as you

Above: Workmanlike, functional graphics are a frontend to an engaging and fun game.

navigate the death-filled halls and fiery pits to uncover all of the games' secrets.

A map is available and rightly so, as it would be only too easy to get hopelessly lost otherwise.

Each room brings a challenge, some greater than others. Some rooms are merely a pathway to be safely traversed, while others require the disposing of a collection of



Left & Below: Don't let the simplicity of the graphics make you overlook this gem.

external hard-drives and has found its way back onto my PC each time it has been renewed. It gets everything it set out to do pretty damn spot-on.

I can't find much, if anything to complain about, other than my aching fingers, but would advise everyone to try it at least once and tell me I'm wrong.

Hero Core is a corker.

otherworldly no-goodniks in order to unlock the door to another section.

Generators need to be destroyed to negate impassable barriers. Once again, you will find yourself weaving frantically through a barrage of enemy fire as each one is heavily quarded.

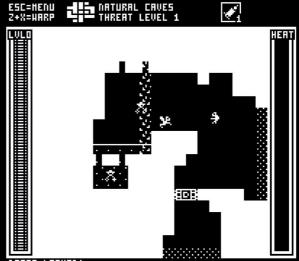
Flip's health is displayed on the left side of the screen, unfortunately none of the bosses, including Tetron have similar guides to let you know how many hundred more bullets you need to pump into whichever weak spot you are firing at when you finally deduce where said spot may be.

This is a minor niggle in an otherwise solid and superbly entertaining little game that has no pretensions about itself. It knows what it is and where it came from and is proud to

be influenced by the games of vore.

Overall, regardless of it being ten years old, I cannot recommend this title highly enough. It is one that has stayed on my various





DOORS LOCKED!







# BROTHERS — a Tale of Two Sons —

SIMON BUTLER IS LIKE AN OLDER BROTHER TO ME — LET'S SEE WHAT HE THINKS ABOUT A GAME ABOUT SIBLINGS! Enter a world of magic, where fairy tales could live. Two nameless brothers on a quest to save their dying father embark on a journey that will define them and open their eyes to the wonder of the land around.

Starbreeze brought this collaborative title to market a good few years ago but for reasons that now escape me, I had always wanted to try a game where the control of two characters was integral.

For the most part, using the two analog sticks and the triggers for each brother does work, until you cross their paths and then my old brain struggled to remember what stick did what and why.

This minor (depending on your point of view) faux pas aside, Brothers is an engaging, albeit brief journey into a world where the smallest of engagements can have major results. It is not the quest that

brings achievement, but
the small side quests
that you can choose
to embark upon or
not. Even sitting
to take in the

views can be worthwhile.

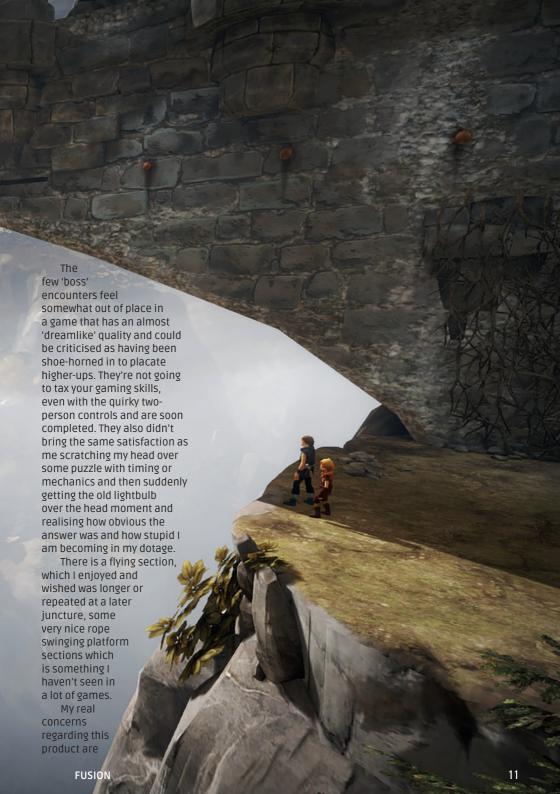
With a language all their own we must translate the meanings for ourselves as the siblings rush to save their Father, but you are seldom at a loss as to what is required at any given point.

The world is well designed and somewhat linear, but the few sidetracks are pleasant enough and well worth taking.

The characters themselves don't bear close examination, as they are not the best-modelled game characters you have seen, but when the camera pulls back to the 'normal' position for gameplay, they are more than sufficient and animated well enough.

Combat is virtually non-existent, with the game relying on puzzle-solving and collaborative actions to cross barriers, move objects etc., but again this is not an issue as it was a welcome change to play something that did not rely on hours of button-mashing or memorising combination button presses.

So if herding goats, moving sheep and operating strange machinery sounds like it just might float your boat, you could do a lot worse than hunting out this appealing little oddity.











Left: Charming graphical locales abound as the Brothers explore the land.

that I often felt that some parts promised more than they actually delivered and wonder if the game was originally intended to be far greater than it is, but perhaps we shall never know.

Nevertheless, I enjoyed Brothers for what it is and for what it attempted. The twin stick control works a large percentage of the time, just as long as you keep each brother firmly on the corresponding side of the screen. Unfortunately, this is physically impossible at times so this is the only stumbling block in an otherwise memorable title.

As with quite a few games I have played over the last year or more, it is all too obvious that you are approaching the game's end, as I do find that content gets somehow less engaging, and the end feels less substantial than the earlier sections.

But, maybe that's just me, who knows?

All in all a jolly fine little game that could have been better but the selling point was collaboration and I think they approached the matter in the only way possible, which was clunky but tolerable





TELLS US A TALE FROM HIS TIME AT SENSIBLE SOFTWARE

It wasn't all game dev and looking geeky for the camera at Sensible, we had our fair share of playtime too — in between the long days, even longer nights and the occasional trip to the local pub for refuelling.

I recall back in the old Sensi offices at Station Road. March (Cambridgeshire), Chris Yates walks in one afternoon grinning from ear to ear as he carried a rather large box — I think Jops was also with him. So I look at Jools - Jools looks at Chipper Chipper looks at me, we all then turn our bewildered gaze to this mystery box. We didn't have to wait long for our said bewilderment to be suppressed; inside the box were some radio control cars along with an assortment of rechargeable batteries and chargers. The cars had chunky wheels, visible suspension and were a little bit like the main sprite

in Buggy Boy! Within no time the first race was underway, swerving between the chairs, dodging the desks as well as other stuff making great this makeshift slalom course, but there was just a bit too much stuff in the way to get some speed up. Hold on, what if we try them in the car park? I don't know who suggested it but we all shot downstairs and took the race outside!

Being located next to a post industrial railway station, there were quite a few unused sidings, one being located directly at the Above: A rather un-sensible remote controlled car — ideal for playing with inbetween developing hit games!

end of the car park. Aha! And, it had a ramp for unloading freight onto the back of lorries! Do unloading ramps make good launch pads for RC cars? Well ves they most certainly do! The cars were very sturdy, so much so that once we all realised the first one had survived the bounce on to the track below. it wasn't long before we all had to give it a go! Ahhh just another Sensible day, doing rather (un?)Sensible things!



There were readers who already thought the CRASH Lemmings was fairly gruesome, but — 'Sega Force was supposed to be off-thewall and weird. Stuck for inspiration. I turned to Roger. I said, why not turn the

**美国民意及高高高克克** 

Writing in an America blog, John Bower said, 'Sega Force captured an audience in the United Kingdom by drawing them in with the kind of artwork that made you think you were getting something more than just a bunch of game tips and kiss-ass game previews.' He then showed and commented on many of Oli Frey's covers for the magazine. 'But I've saved the

look in horror at the ground speeding toward them and the splattered bodies of their compatriots below. What could this gruesome scene possibly be in reference to? Why it's Lemmings, of course. The fun. light-hearted puzzle game.'

'I had already painted a Lemmings cover for CRASH issue 94 and I didn't want to

repeat it,' says Oli in recollection.

lemmings into real game players falling over a cliff edge. However, I had no idea that Oli would create this stomach-churning. vertigo-inducing horror. It's wonderful! Even the colours, magenta and screaming green add to

the effect.

I'll leave Mr Bower with the last word: 'Drawings of hordes of people walking off a cliff like a Tom and Jerry meets Jonestown. That's what I miss the most about these classic gaming magazines.'

'The one cover that stands above the rest and says 'screw your childhood. look at this". A grisly depiction of children falling to their deaths. their eyes wide and their mouths agape as they

hest for

last,' he

went on.

Right: You can almost hear the screams!







JONATHAN HAMBLIN DONS HIS FLIGHT JACKET AND TELLS US TALES OF HIS WING COMMANDER ADVENTURES

It was a dark and stormy winter's night, and rain lashed down against the windscreen of our car. The wipers weren't actually moving — Dad didn't believe in them. Well, he believed in their existence, just not their use. Similarly, the heating was off, and the radio was silent. As we slalomed through the rain, I reached out to open the glove box, hopeful that it might actually contain some gloves. Without taking his eyes off the road, Dad slapped my tiny monkey hands away. He said nothing, but his message was clear — we were on a manly quest, and men didn't wear gloves.

A few months previously, Dad had got the kit PC bug. He was an engineer, so he'd always enjoyed tinkering with technology. In his early career, he'd worked for Burroughs, one of the first major computer manufacturing companies. He'd move from office to office throughout London, fixing broken accounting machines and flirting with secretaries. Since then, he'd moved onto larger machines. working in the engine rooms of Customs boats and taking out pirates and smugglers alongside the SBS. He had arms like tree trunks coupled with a brain that just knew how things worked — in my mind, he was like John Matrix in a Captain Birdseye costume. He'd heavily modded our BBC B Micro, even added a Hayes modem so he could read BBSs, but it wasn't until the very early 90s that he found his religion — DIY PCs.

His church was a rectangular beige box, held in place with a holy trinity of screws to allow swift removal. He'd spend hours under its roof, tweaking and tuning, occasionally praying, as he inserted another megabyte of RAM or a slightly larger hard-drive.

He scoured computer fairs and Micro-Mart

**Below:** The iconic logo of Origin —boasting sound and graphics system FX!





magazine for cheap suppliers, many of whom were little more than hobbyists like himself. His colleagues began to become interested in the idea of having home computers, and he started making machines for them, spending much of his spare time assembling his 386 SX powerhouses that would race along at almost 12MHz!

After a few months, we needed to find a bigger supplier of parts — we were running out of stock regularly. I say we. In an attempt to spend time with my Dad, I'd often hover around him like a gnat. passing him screwdrivers and asking him annoying questions. The best bit was always when he'd finished a machine and we'd hit the power button for the first time. The tension was always there — would it boot up? Or would it just make a series of beeps and then lie there. inert. If something went wrong, he'd be frustrated and surly, while he fiddled with wires - but when it

went right, we'd all be high fiving each other. Mentally of course my Dad didn't believe in high fives. So one night, in my capacity as chief cheerleader and head of screwdriver holding, I departed on a mission with my Dad to a dealer's house in Watford and what we found there was like nothing I'd ever seen before.

I can't remember the guy's name, but we shall call him Derek, for Derek is the kind of name that one would associate with a Watford man with an Aladdin's cave of computer components in the garage of his suburban house. There were boxes and boxes of chips and screws and an entire palette of sound cards 'What the hell is a sound card?'. I asked myself. 'Why would you need a card to make bleepy bleeps?' As if to answer the question in my head, the sound of an orchestra tuning up suddenly came from behind. I spun, to see Derek grinning through his gold capped teeth and pointing me towards the 14" monitor,

Left: The Space Bar, where space drunks and worn out pilots go for some time-out.

just in time for me to see a conductor lead his crew of motley instrument brothers in a huge fanfare. Fireworks exploded on screen and off as the Origin FX Sound and Graphics System logo appeared. The words 'In the distant future. Mankind is locked in a deadly war!' appeared on the screen, and suddenly spaceships zoomed into view — this was incredible! As the Hornet ripped the Dralthi to shreds with it's laser cannon, my jaw dropped. The title swooped up majestically - 'Wing Commander' and my brain began to simmer. Then, suddenly, I was sat in the cockpit of a spaceship and I. well I died. Instantly. Suddenly things felt a lot more familiar. I realized that my dream of a game where you could actually pilot a spaceship, was just that — a bream. That's not a typo by the way - my Dad called dreams breams, because 'Just when you think you've got them in the net, you jolt into wakefulness and realize vou've got nothing but wet hands.' He was fond of the mystifying oceanic metaphor was my Dad.

With a heavy heart,
I entered my name as
prompted, and wait a second!
I was in a space bar! I chatted
to Shotglass, and Angel and
the dude who looked like a
poorly pixilated Cary Elwes. I
went to the Barracks, where



a slightly sad tattoo pumped out of the speakers as water dripped from the ceiling into a bucket that would never fill, which may seem unrealistic to modern players, but familiar to anyone who ever tried to fill up a Natwest piggy

**Below**: Strapping in and thrusting helmets on ready for action!

bank as a child.

I entered the briefing room, which had all the lightbulbs set to 'Dramatic'. I received my marching orders, Suddenly we were running to our ships, strapping in, thrusting our helmets on, and leaving the safety of the Tiger's Claw for the deep

**Above:** It's a bit quiet, this space thing. Where is everyone?

void of space. Holy crap, you actually could pilot the ships. And dogfight against your mortal foes, the Kilrathi, who were, quite frankly, pirate space cats. For some reason, every time they appeared



on screen, Derek's pitbull (who had been snoozing unnoticed in the corner of the room) would wake up and start barking at the screen. Thinking about it, he probably would have made an excellent wingman in the fight against the Kilrathi. Although being devious intergalactic moggies, they'd probably soon get wise, and start deploying squirrels as chaff. I locked on my first missile and fired, only to see the Kilrathi ship explode in a cinematic ball of fire - I experienced a feeling of torrid excitement that is commonly referred to by experts as 'loosing your shit'.

Suddenly, a hand was on my shoulder, pulling me away from the keyboard. I would like to say I acted with good grace, and calmly stepped away from the keyboard, before politely thanking Derek and his unnecessarily large dog for the chance to play the game. But this would be a lie. I had discovered a whole new level of gaming, a white-knuckle space-sim. far removed from the simple pleasures of Space Quest II and Battle Chess. We slowly drove home, and as my hot tears slowly iced up on my cheeks in the freezing car, I knew I had to have this game in my life.

Over the next few months, I begged, wheedled, and yes, blackmailed my Dad into upgrading our PC to the requisite specs. This thing requires almost a megabyte of RAM!', he grumbled. But eventually, after what seemed like an age, and a not inconsiderable amount of fiddling with

the Config.sys file, I could play Wing Commander from the comfort of my own pants. I played it to death, even mastering the Kurosawa 2 mission, the Wing Commander equivalent of beating the Kobayashi Maru simulation. Over the next few years, PC gaming exploded I thrilled to Duke Nukem's platforming exploits, scratched my head as I tried to unearth the treasure of Big Whoop, and felt physically sickened as I shot my first dog in Wolfenstien 3D's cubist corridors. The Wing Commander franchise expanded too, requiring ever more herculean feats of PC upgrading to keep up with creator Chris Robert's demands for graphical fidelity. Eventually X-Wing

Below: Watch out Mr Wingman, coming through!

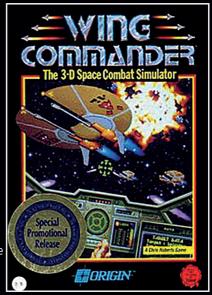


came out, and let me live out my Star Wars fantasies for real (apart from the one that involved brushing Princess Leia's hair while she told me about her problems).

Gaming moved on. Simulations became ever more sophisticated, until they dropped out of favour all together. I became a games journalist to feed my addiction, and to prove my Dad wrong when he said: 'You'll never earn a living playing games, son'. But I never forgot that sense of child-like wonder that I first experienced with Wing Commander, that sense of seeing something so mind bafflingly brilliant that your brain belly flopped into a higher state of consciousness. That feeling of achievement, as you slowly rose through the ranks of the Terran Confederation.

Here were the moments that put hairs on your chest, the moments that made you want to make bold choices in life. Drenched in sweat, dog fighting through a fleet of ships as you try to get in the last laser shot that will take down the Kilrathi starbase, you don't realise the significance. but years later you will - these are the moments that make thee

As for my Dad, well he still doesn't believe in windscreen wipers. Or high fives. Or earning a living playing computer games. But I still love him anyway.



**Down:** It's exhausting all this anti-gravity stuff — maybe I will save my campaign whilst I sleep!



Having missed the CD-based games revolution with the N64, Nintendo needed to do something spectacular with the follow-up to their last great cartridge-based console. That system was, of course, the GameCube.

Anyone who had the dedication to wait in line for the midnight release of the Gamecube was rewarded with one of the best line-up of launch titles of any console. Luigi's Mansion was an unexpectedly brilliant game which once again demonstrated just how creative Nintendo could be — the real showstopper though was 'Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader'. This was, and still is, a genuinely jaw-dropping game. Nothing has come close to the experience of screaming down the Death Star trench, Tie Fighters harrying you all the way and turbo-lasers blasting towards you. During its comparatively short life, the GameCube was home to some incredible gaming experiences. Nintendo created some amazing first-party titles; F-Zero GX is sublime, easily holding up with similar games on the PS4; Ikaruga is a must for fans of bullet-hell shooters and Animal Crossing made its first showing outside of Japan and proved to be a very relaxing experience.

Clip-on the Gameboy Player to the bottom of the GameCube and you have one of the best ways, still to this day, to play the entire range of Game Boy and GBA games.

For the ultimate Gamecube experience, find yourself a Panasonic Q, a Japanonly variant which turns the humble plastic console into a shiny silver work of art.

## HEAVEN& HELL

This is unusual for me; I'm struggling to think of anything against owning a GameCube. They are not expensive to buy like a lot of retro consoles, games are for the most part still reasonably priced and there is plenty to go round. The hardware is generally very reliable and easy to fix.

If pushed, then I could point out that trying to find a complete Game Boy Player is an absolute nightmare as almost all of them are missing the game disc that is needed to make it work. There are solutions to get around this, but none as simple as using the actual software

Should you want to treat yourself and own a Panasonic Q then this is where the GameCube experience can fall down a big black hole. To start with, they are not cheap to buy. Expect to pay a big premium to add one to your collection, but this is only the start of your worries. As the Q is designed to play DVD's as well as normal GameCube discs, it is fitted with a different type of optical drive. This drive unit appears to have been made with rice paper as they will break, and when they do they will shatter into a million-billion pieces (I'm really not joking here). Even a small knock can damage the drive rails to the point you cannot eject the tray. Thankfully, 3D printed replacements provide much-needed spares, even if you might cause more damage when fitting them. Oh, a tip from the wise — remember this is a Japan-only system, so don't plug 240V into it. The result could be shocking.

#### FUSION's recommendation

Buy a GameCube and lose yourself in one of the best consoles ever.

## TANKEOMMAND

#### BRIGADIER WILKINS, COMMANDER OF THE WEST WALES TANK DIVISION, GOES INTO BATTIE

This was another one of those presents that sat under the tree for a number of weeks before Christmas Day where I had no idea what it was. It was delivered by an auntie some weeks before; was pretty large and when shaken there were a lot of bits moving around inside the packaged

The gift was one of the first pressies I opened that Christmas as my curiosity was piqued and overflowing. Tearing off the wrapping paper I was presented with an image of a kid playing a board game depicting a war torn battlefield with a number of plastic tanks on top with the slogan 'Command your own tank force in this strategic battle action game'. This was Tank Command.

The game was released in 1975 and comprised of a plastic base with a notched moveable central slide that housed each of the four tanks that belonged to each player. This rested on a battle scarred

playing field scattered with mines. The land mines, aka plastic pegs that moved up into the base, were activated by the player pulling a string behind their bunker. Each player had 10 shells numbered 1-10 and simultaneously picked a shell out of their bunker — the player with the highest valued shell winning. If both shells had the same value, then both were discarded and the tanks not moved. The winning number was then added to that on the losing shell of the opponent and the base moved the total number of spaces forwards to the opposing base. If any of the tanks of the opposing





team moved over a mine on the retreat, the string could be pulled, and the enemy tank(s) taken out of the game — both shells are then subsequently taken out the game. Tank Command is played over two rounds with the winner being the player with the most tanks still in play.

Being of an age of less than 10 when I received this game for Christmas, the play mechanics were all a little too overwhelming. I can remember reading the instructions and not really appreciating what had to be done. It was one of those games that really did not work if there was not a second

player and as such I mostly played war games with the tanks accompanied by my little plastic army men – so when my mates or family were not around, Tank Command still got some play!





Above: The plastic tanks were great

to play both in the game and on their



## GRMES CHART FLASHBACK

Nintendo 64 - September 1998

#### COLIN AND JAMES FROM LETS TALK RETRO LOOK BACK TO SEPTEMBER 1998 AND THE NINTENDO 64 CHARTS

#### >> Colin

For this Games Chart Flashback, we're going back to September 1998. A time when Robbie (Williams) was topping the UK singles chart with Millennium and if you went to the cinema you might have watched Tom Hanks in Saving Private Rvan, Mel Gibson and Danny Glover in Lethal Weapon 4 or Cameron Diaz stealing the hearts of Ben Stiller, Matt Dillon, Lee Evans and Chris Elliott in There's Something about Mary. But for us gamers the most important thing would probably have been which games

where riding high in the N64 chart

#### >> James

Yes, I would have definitely been keeping a close eye on the great games coming out on the N64 back then. At number five in this chart we find Diddy Kong Racing a game that was developed by Rare. The game in many ways isn't too dissimilar to Mario Kart 64 and on its release, opinions were split as to which game was the better. The game features a story mode, a multiplayer mode, and two characters who would eventually appear in their own games, Banjo and Conker. The game was also later ported over to the DS in 2007.

>> Colin

At number 4 in the chart is Cruis'n World a game I must admit that I've never played myself and know nothing about. As you're a big N64 collector James maybe you can shed some light on it for me.

> >> James Cruis'n World was

originally a racing game by Midway that appeared in arcades in 1996 and was the sequel to the earlier Cruis'n USA. The game is similar to many other racers in that you race on different tracks under a time limit to reach the goal. passing checkpoints to help extend your time limit. The races take place in different countries around the world and the cars have the ability to perform stunts during races such as wheelies, which give short speed bursts, and aerial flips, which deduct seconds from the final race time. The N64 version had an extra track. which unlocks once the player completes 'Cruise the World' mode, and it also featured an exclusive Championship mode.

#### >> Colin

It sounds like my kind of game, but I just don't remember it. At number 3 in the chart though is a game I'm sure we all remember in GoldenEve.

#### >> James

Yes, and the second game in this chart from Rare. I'm sure we probably can't say much about GoldenEye that everyone doesn't already know, except didn't you and your friends have an



5. Diddy Kong Racing (Rare)

interesting way of playing team deathmatch on it?

#### >> Colin

Your right but I'm not sure if it was just us or if everyone did it. The problem with playing the multiplayer games in GoldenEve was that everyone would be playing on the same TV with the screen split into four sections. This meant that once you were familiar with the maps you could see and know exactly where everyone was in the game, making it easy to find and kill each other. So, to overcome this we would use a simple rf splitter to split the video signal coming out of the N64 and send it to two TV's which we had set up back to back. With the same N64 picture now displayed on both TV's we would play team deathmatch with one team playing on the top half of one TV and the other team playing on the bottom half of the other. The next step was for each team to cover over the half of their TV screen that they weren't playing on with a piece of card and then finally to turn off the on-screen map in the game options. With this all set up neither team could see where the other team was in the game and it made for some great team deathmatch multiplayer action.

#### >> James

That sounds like it would take a bit of setting up with two old heavy CRT's involved but I'm sure like you say it made for a fun and much improved multiplayer experience. Moving on and it's not that often we get through a chart without a FIFA game and

this one is no different with FIFA World Cup 98 sitting in the number two spot.

#### >> Colin

Yes, another FIFA title and this was the first official FIFA World Cup game to be developed by EA Sports after they obtained the rights from FIFA in 1997. There were also versions of the game on the Sony PlayStation and PC. I remember buying the game at the time and didn't really have any complaints. It played a good game of football, had a decent World Cup tournament mode and featured all of the 32 teams that qualified for the tournament that year.

#### >> James

Well as you know I'm not a football fan so I have nothing to really add so will move

swiftly on to the game sitting proudly in the number one spot and it's the third game in this chart for Rare with Banio-Kazooie. The game as most will know is an enjoyable platform style game that follows the story of Banjo, and a bird named. Kazooie, as they try to stop the evil witch Gruntilda from stealing the beauty of Banjo's younger sister, Tooty. The game features nine different worlds in which the player must collect musical notes and jigsaw pieces, called jiggies, to progress. It's a game I remember really enjoying playing back in the good old N64 days.

#### >> Colin

So that just about wraps up this chart, as usual we will leave you with some game cheats.



## CHEATS

#### **GOLDENEYE**

To unlock all guns - while playing the game, press L + R + Down, L + C-Left, L + C-Right, L + R + C-Left, L + Down, L + C-Down, R + C-Left, L + R + C-Right, R + Up, L + C-Left.

For invincibility - while playing the game, press L + Down, R + C-Right, R + C-Up, L + Right, L + C-Down, R + C-Up, L + Right, R + Down, L + Left, L + R + C-Right.



CHRIS WILKINS CATCHES
UP WITH BOTH PHILIP
AND ANDREW OLIVER TO
TALK ABOUT THE STORY
BEHIND THEIR GAMES
AND THE EVERCADE

Back in March, Philip contacted me to let me know that Blaze Entertainment were interested in producing a cartridge containing all of their NES games for the new Evercade console. I was really excited to hear this but had to keep it quiet until it was officially announced. Now that it is, I thought it would be a great idea to go back and ask them out all about it

Chris Wilkins: Philip perhaps you could tell me how this cartridge actually came about?

**Philip Oliver:** Well actually we've got you to thank for

some of this, since I guess you can trace this back to when we first discovered our unreleased NES games by accident back at Play Blackpool in May 2015. You helped that game get produced as a limited production run of NES cartridges as part of another Kickstarter campaign (I believe it was for our book!) you were running. That reignited interest in our old unreleased games and we hunted the loft for further games.

Andrew Oliver: We went on to find the source code for Dreamworld Pogie, Mystery World Dizzy and the reimagined Panic! Dizzy, which with the help of Łukasz Kur, we were able to recompile, tidy up and remaster. You then ran a Kickstarter campaign for each of them, releasing limited production NES cartridges for each.

**CW:** So when did you develop these and how come they were never released?

PO: After creating many Amstrad and Spectrum games for Codemasters between 86 and the end of 89, we turned our attention to the NES (Nintendo Entertainment System) console. Over the next two years we produced six NES games that were released, these being BMX Simulator, Fantastic Dizzy, Firehawk, Super Robin Hood, Go! Dizzy Go! and Dizzy the Adventurer.

AO: We really enjoyed working on the NES console and got a great 'production line' going and Codemasters encouraged us to produce even more NES games, but in the background there were issues releasing them to the main market, North

**Below:** The Evercade console showing off a number of its cartridges.





Left: By the time you read this, this Oliver Twins cartridge will have been released for the Evercade.

America. They were using a Canadian distributor called Camerica who didn't have official Nintendo approval to do so. Sadly this eventually resulted in Camerica going out of business and games that were in the pipeline never got released.

CW: How did Codemasters feel about these games being released. I know, because I was involved in those releases, but it's more for the benefit of the Fusion readers?

PO: Codemasters continue to have an interest in the intellectual property contained within these games but we agreed that the cartridges would have very limited production runs and all royalties would go to charity which they were happy with.

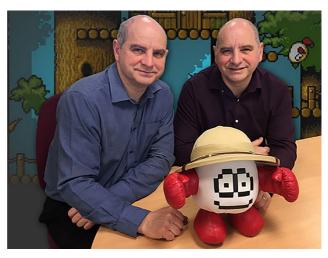
AO: We're just very pleased to see our games finally released and in the hands of players. We make these games for people to enjoy them, it's never been just about the money. The money just helped us develop our next games.

CW: So how did the deal come about with Evercade and the new Oliver Twins compilation cartridge?

PO: Back in March, Robert

at PixelHeart, a leading Retro Game Publisher and distributor contacted me out of the blue. He said he was working closely with Blaze Entertainment, the guys behind the Evercade, and said they'd really like a Dizzy Collection cartridge since it had been requested many times through social media. I felt that a cartridge containing games from different formats would appear messy. Since they all had different graphic limitations and I suggested it would be a lot cleaner to just go with one format and the obvious format to choose was the NES. This was a very clever console in the way it dealt with the limitations of the 80s 8-bit speed, graphics and memory limitations which defined what many people consider the 'retro game' look and feel. I also thought that since we had produced 11 NES games that this would create a

Below: Philip and Andrew with some geezer in a hat!



more interesting and diverse cartridge if they were all included. Robert and Andrew at Blaze were really excited by the idea.

**CW**: So how did Codemasters feel about this one?

PO: It was clear from the outset that this was more than vour limited run Kickstarter campaigns for unreleased games. Codemasters is a commercial organisation looking for licensing fees. However, after a friendly negotiation during which the Coronavirus had just put everyone into lockdown, it was agreed between all parties that given the terrible implications of the pandemic that all profits should go to a charity hit hard by Covid-19. As patrons of The National Videogame Museum, I suggested them as worthy recipients given that they had to close their doors and had lost all their income. They all agreed and we all moved forward.

AO: We supplied Blaze with the ROMs of all the games and they produced some fantastic artwork and box designs for our approval. This was then used for the announcement on 10th lune

**CW:** Are you looking forward to signing loads?

PO: Yes, I see your Fusion Annual Kickstarter perk "FUSION Dizzy BLAZE" got 135 backers — so that we'll take care of signing them!

**AO:** ...and you can send them out!

**CW:** What do you think of the Evercade?

AO: There have been many



ways over the years to play classic retro games, but they were usually bootlegged and clunky. Retro fans are nostalgic and want to do right by those original game developers. The Evercade offers an official way to conveniently play these games, either portably or on a big TV, with hardware buttons that feel close to the original experience.

**PO:** Yes — it works really well and it's a good price too! We're looking forward to seeing and playing the final cartridge too!

**Above:** Some PR imagery with Dizzy swinging across a ravine with Evercade in hand.

CW: Me too! Thank you again for your time, it's always a pleasure to chat. We'll have to go for a curry again sometime when it's safe to return to restaurants. This one will be on me!

PO: Sounds good!

AO: Count me in!

Right: The 11 games you will find on The Oliver Twins Collection on the Evercade.



MYSTERY WORLD DIZZY







DIZZY THE **ADVENTURE** 



DREAMWORLD POGIE



FIREHAWK



PANIC DIZZY





SUPER ROBIN HOOD



TREASURE ISLAND DIZZY



WONDERLAND DIZZY



#### ON A VISIT TO THE USA, CHRIS WILKINS PICKS UP A PAC-MAN CONSOLE FROM WALMART

Pac-Man was always a firm favourite of mine in the arcades — a game that was for me simple to play but really hard to master. I would (and still do) get onto the third or fourth level and lose all my lives very quickly as the action sped up, and the reaction times have to be a little quicker. There are obviously patterns to learn

in this game, and watching the likes of Jon Stoodley play Pac-Man at events around the UK, it is clear that if you do have the time, patience and willingness to 'learn' this game, then massive hi-scores can be achieved.

handhelds over the years — ever since the game indeed hit the arcade in the 80s. Back at that time, as well as the home computer and console versions, the handheld incarnations were an imitation of this fine game — those that come to mind are Pac-Man on the Atari 2600, Muncher on the ZX Spectrum and the Tomytronic Pac-Man handheld from 1981.

I visited America back in April last year, and where we stayed was close to a Walmart — a massive supermarket of sorts that sold almost everything. The gaming area was huge covering everything modern as well as having a well-stocked retro section. Among the little handheld devices and miniature arcade machines, I spotted My Arcade's Pacman - the packaging was in bright yellow and had a flap that could be lifted on the front so that the console itself could be seen. For \$19.99. I made the call that if it wasn't very good, and the expectation was from experience it would not be, then I would take the hit. With the family watching Netflix



There have been a myriad of Pac-Man



in the evenings, this could be something that I could pick up and play to pass the time, instead of watching another series of vampire related shenanigans.

The packaging for this little console is very nicely done and sells the console very well to the impulse purchaser, i.e. the likes of me. with Pac-Man branding and the option to look at the actual contents inside. First impression of the console is that it was very light pop two batteries in though and it does have a comfortable weighty feel to it. There are 3 games available — Pac-Man. Pac-Panic and Pac-Mania. I went straight for the original Pac-Man game, as that was the main reason for purchasing.

The screen is bright and displays a crisp image of the game being played. The control buttons include reset, start, A and B buttons and a big red D-Pad for movement. The buttons work fine for what they are — I did have concerns on seeing the control pad, as I know from experience using that kind of circular pad inflicts discomfort on the left thumb

after pro-longed use. The main game is in the centre of the LCD screen with stats for the game such as score, lives etc. located around the boundary. The Pac-Man game itself plays really well — probably one of the best versions of the game I have played outside the arcade game itself and the sound for a device like this is actually quite good. I completed the first number of levels as I normally do, then there is the attract sequence of the ghosts chasing Pac-Man then Pac-Man chasing them back, and then it's onto the next screens and it's here that I keep getting caught and losing lives again! So it plays just as I remember! I played and played and played this console whilst on holiday looking to better my score swallowing pills and catching ghosts. And yes, my left thumb did throb after more than 30 minutes of play at a go but the D-pad was surprisingly accurate in making 90 degree turns in the mazes played on.

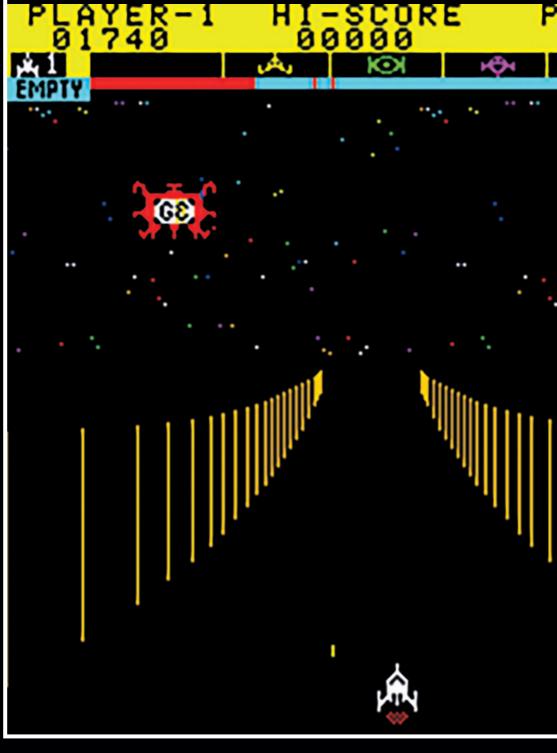
Taking a look at the other 2 games — Pac-Mania is a version of the isometric arcade game and runs a little

Above: An atractive looking console that fits well in the hand. There is no mistaking that this is Pac-Man.

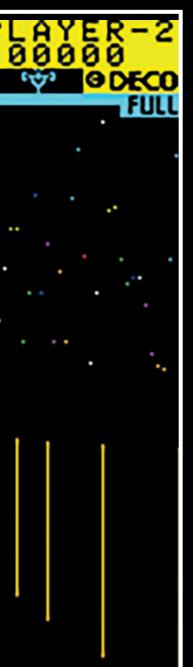
slow to be comfortable and the sound is quite dreadful which is common on these little handhelds, so it not recommended although it looks the part. The game is pretty much the Pac-man game but with a 3D standpoint where the walls look like pieces of Lego. Pac-Panic is a Tetris type game released by Namco for the Super Nintendo **Entertainment System and** the Megadrive — this is one of those versions running under emulation and is not a bad game at all if you like Tetris type games.

As a package then, this little console comes highly recommended just for the version of Pac-Man it offers — the additional two games prove to be the snacks after the main course but are welcome.

With the console now on sale from leading gaming stores and on Amazon in the UK for around the £25 mark, it is well worth picking up.



32





## FUSION

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Game : Astro Fighter

Year : 1983 System : Arcade

In the township I grew up, home of Dylan Thomas don't you know, there was a little café at the bottom of the hill that did take-away chips for the locals and had a sit-down area in the next room for visitors from afar. In that room the owner used to swap out an arcade machine — just the one, but it would be there long enough to get good at the game, and not so long as to get completely bored of it. One such game was Astro Fighter.

I had never heard of this particular game or seen it anywhere else — the first impression I had when first encountering it was that it sounded awesome. The volume on that cabinet was sky high and you could literally hear the screams of the final screen baddie from half way up the hill.

The game is a vertical shooter with four distinct screens, each with a different type of baddie — the aim is to clear all the enemies from one area and get through them all with one tank of fuel. If one of the blighters on a screen manages to get past you, shouts of disgust and despair ensue as all the enemies reappear and further fuel for their clearance is wasted. The refuelling end of level red monster thing needs shooting right in the middle of the underneath of its belly — and with only a tiny bit of fuel left. The fact that it just won't keep still accompanied with the screaming noise it makes as it is moves from the left to the right of the screen is stressful to say the least.

Refuelling has never felt this good. This was one of the early arcade games that defined my childhood.

## 

# 0

The Transformers toy range has always had a certain coolness about it. How could kids (of any age) not love giant robots that, with a flick of the wrist, turn into jet fighters, racing cars and in some cases even bigger robots?

Two of the most impressive Transformers ever released were created thanks to a collaboration between Takara Tomy, the original creators of the toy line, along with Sega and Sony. This unholy trinity spawned the Sony Playstation Optimus Prime and the 'Evil' Sega Megadrive Megatron

First impressions are very good, with both figures being very highly detailed in both robot and alternate modes. Optimus Prime (the eternal goodie-two shoes) transforms into the original Sony PlayStation complete with controller and memory card. Standing just over 30cm tall, he looks incredible. The boring grey colour of the console is offset by bright flashes of red, a throwback to the original red Kenworth truck that the first G1 toy transformed into.

The joints are nice and tight but don't have that feeling that applying a bit too much pressure will cause sudden irreparable damage to a

limb. Transform him into his alternative PlayStation form and he looks equally good. It's never going to fool anyone that this is a real console, if nothing

else the size is a dead giveaway,

but sitting next to Megatron,





## 



it makes an awesome display piece.

Speaking of Megatron, rather than his normal gun or tank form, he can be found masquerading as an

original first edition Sega
Megadrive. Equally detailed on
both robot and console form
— this version of Megatron
looks spectacular in a coat
of Megadrive inspired paint.
Much like the Optimus

Prime Playstation,
Megatron is a nonfunctioning unit but
with him being
very similar in
size to the Sega
Megadrive
Mini released
last year, it

does make you wonder if it would actually be possible to create a custom version that could actually play real videogames — that would be a hell of a conversation piece.

Looking closely at both figures, its clear a lot of attention has been spent to capture all of the details of the original consoles, plenty of detail has been sculpted during the creation of these toys resulting in a pair of extremely desirable items for both video game fans and toy collectors alike. Equal attention has been lavished on the boxes the figure is packaged in, both have stunning imagery on all sides, the front covers are particularly colourful and display very well on a shelf.

If we have tempted you to try and find one or both of these figures then you need to be aware that it can be tricky to find cheap examples. They are available on eBay but do expect to pay good money.



35

FUSION

16-BIT

## JAMES WOODCOCK TRIES TO EXPLAIN WHY HE STILL LOVES THE POINT AND CLICK ADVENTURE GAME AND THE BATTLE TO MAKE THEM RUN ON MODERN HARDWARE

Nostalgia, the invisible force within us all that propels us to relive our favourite memories. Often, these charming sentiments overtake our emotions and the trip down memory lane often takes us off into a ditch as the stark reality laid bare is far from what we remember. Where 3D polygonal based games from the past have often invoked these troubling sensations, I have yet to experience this with one genre in particular, the classic Point and Click Adventure.

Looking back, it all started, at least for me, on the Acorn Archimedes A3010. With a need for nine floppy disks to store all of the game data (and this wasn't even with speech playback. which would arrive only on the CD-ROM version), it was a young aspiring wizard with a sarcastic wit which caught my attention. Yes, of course, I am referring to Simon the Sorcerer. I was so enamoured by this game, I later purchased the CD-ROM version for the PC. A PC I might add, I didn't even own yet. I could literally write pages and pages reminiscing about this one title in particular, maybe that is an article for another time. For now though, let's just grab a mouse, sit in front of a CRT monitor and remember the good old point and click adventure days.

There are literally hundreds of Point and Click Adventure games, though there were certain key titles that stood out more than



the others. Sam and Max: Hit the Road, Broken Sword, Monkey Island, Toonstruck, Beneath a Steel Sky, Discworld — the list goes on and on. All of them have the ability to tell a captivating story, often packed full of humour — all through the simple process of collecting items and using them in various combinations to solve puzzles. The difficulty however always arises when you need to figure out which of these combinations work, often taunted by a singular voice clip stating 'That doesn't work' over and over and over again with hundreds of your failed attempts to make a positive match thanks Rincewind! Yet with this seemingly overly frustrating tedium, you plough on as you are excited to hear the next bit of dialogue and the next beautifully animated scene as you invest your time and efforts into the character you are controlling.

Even though these old games my not work natively on modern systems it's still relatively easy to play and experience these classics, you just need the right software installed on one of the myriad of supported platforms. I own an iPad 2 purchased in 2011. Yes it is old by today's standards and actually, many of the apps from the Apple App Store don't work anymore, but it remains my favourite way to play classic point and click adventures. I suppose I should refer to it really as pointing and prodding due to the iPad's touchscreen technology rather than using a mouse, however it feels so natural for this genre. Broken Sword on the iPad I simply adore and this method of interacting, especially with headphones on to fully immerse yourself is simply a wonder to behold. I would certainly recommend using a tablet for this genre if you haven't tried it yet yourself.

For years, ScummVM (www.scummvm. org) has been one of the most popular ways to relive this classic genre on a wide assortment of devices. From your powerful beast of a PC, all the way down to the smartphone that fits in your pocket — the developers have spent an enormous amount of time ensuring a vast collection of point and click adventure games are available to play (as long as you have the original game files of course). It hasn't stopped there though, remasters of classic titles have

Left: Broken Sword Director Cut on the PC.



also appeared on modern formats including lovingly recreated versions of Day of the Tentacle and Full Throttle to name just a couple. With swanky new high-resolution backdrops, animations and music, yet keeping the original speech (although without the harsh compression from the past) — a whole new generation has been introduced to this dazzling world.

Thankfully the fans of retro gaming still adore point and click adventure games, showing just how well they have stood the test of time. New titles are still appearing or in development, with many of these games taking influence from the glory days of the past, using the best elements of classic titles and bringing them to a whole new audience. Long live point and click adventures!







**Right**: From top to bottom: Day of the Tentacle, ToonStruck and Beneath a Steel Sky.



NOT JUST A COLLECTOR, QUANG ALSO DEVELOPS GAMES — HERE HE TALKS ABOUT HIS LATEST PROJECT

I grew up playing Videogames throughout the 80s and 90s. Starting with the Atari 2600 VCS, then various home videogame consoles and micro computers through the ages —I did have a particular fascination for games in the arcades, as that is where the most impressive ones were at the time.

I remember my parents taking us to the seaside towns of Southend and Margate where I spent more time playing in the arcades than actually being outside on the beach. It was always the big deluxe cabinets that really caught my eye, and Sega were the kings of this — Outrun, Super Hang-on, Space Harrier, Thunderblade, the list goes on. These were the Sega Super Scaler arcade games, games that took amazing 2D sprites and scaled them effectively to simulate a 3D environment, way before 3D polygons became the norm.

With our first computer, a Sinclair ZX Spectrum +2, I decided I wanted to make videogames. I learnt to code in Spectrum BASIC, upgraded to an Atari ST with STOS the Games Creator, then onto a PC with Borland Turbo Pascal, followed by C and Assembly as I started coding for the Nintendo GameBoy.

I got a job working in the games industry coding for the GameBoy Color for a year. I then had to take eight years out, away from all computer and returned to making games in 2007 and started Asobi.tech, with help from my brother

Viet 'Veepixels'. We both re-learned our craft, making mini games and taking part in many game iams.

Jump forward to July 2016 we took part in one of these game jams located at Castle Ôrebro Sweden. For those that don't know, a game jam is where you have a limited amount of time to





create a videogame from scratch, usually based on a given theme announced at the event. This was Castle Game Jam 2016, the theme was 'Dimensions' with a bunch of sub themes in different categories to choose from. We chose the following: Design — Castle: Audio — Chiptune: Graphics - Minimalistic and Code - Procedural Generation. I had been wanting to recreate the look and feel of those old Sega Super Scaler arcade games for a while and create a love letter to those arcades of old. But how were we going to do this in the five days?

We brainstormed ideas and talked about our favourite sprite scaling games — what we liked about them; how they made us feel and which ideas would fit the theme best. We wanted to incorporate Castle Orebro where we were working, in some way. Studio Ghibli's Laputa - Castle in

the Sky, gave us the idea of a floating castle as the goal.

Setting the world of our game in another 'dimension', lead us to fuse the dragon Uriah, from the bonus stage of Space Harrier, with the Cat Bus from the anime My Neighbour Totoro — thus what we had was a flying cat-dragon avoiding obstacles, while picking up passengers hanging from balloons. We called this creation MaoMao.

I had never actually made a sprite scaling type engine before, but theoretically it should be simple. Take each sprite and scale its X and Y dimensions by the Z distance it is away from the screen. I messed around with this for a day, getting the vanishing point and scaling values correct. I managed to make the sprites Vee had drawn on his iPad, in his minimalistic pixelart style, scale towards you in a convincing manner. We

Above: With the castle in the distance, you control MaoMao through the scaling environments.

added MaoMao and its multi segmented body and, with a bit of collision detection, we had what was the start of a game.

The next few days we took it pretty casually, working from about 10am to about 10pm each day and then getting a good nights sleep. We grabbed food mostly from Burger King as that was the only place that stayed open late.

More elements in the game were then added, removed and tweaked — like adding the speed dash to smash through obstacles, and removing passenger collection which became just collecting rainbows. Our high score arcade chaser was also taking shape.

On the very last evening, I decided to implement a short level system, which I called waves, within which a specific



task would be required to be performed. This is what the game needed to break up the monotony of the endless runner it was becoming. Also it allowed me to create tutorial waves to teach the player what they could do, could not do and needed to do.

I stayed up and worked throughout that final night to get it functioning, and in the morning Vee arrived and agreed the game now had structure and flow. For the remaining hours of that day, we play tested and tweaked what we had to make it as polished as possible. As you chased the highest score, you randomly went through procedurally generated waves, faster and faster until you ran out of lives.

For audio our friend Cain 'Fishy' McCormack, who has created tracks for OCRemix, provided us with a suitably catchy chiptune. This was squeezed in at the very last moment and I had not even had the time to listen to it before the deadline.

Showcase time had arrived.

Voting for favourites happened while everyone played all the games made in the game jam. MaoMao Castle was playable on a computer, and on mobile devices and Its reception was excellent with those in attendance really enjoyed playing it.

Then we got to the final ceremony and they called out the winners. To our surprise. Best graphics, MaoMao

**Below:** This game is popular with gamers of all ages.



Castle. Best music, MaoMao Castle and Best overall game, MaoMao Castle. We had won three of the six awards.

Even though we were working on another game at the time. MaoMao Castle was loved so much we were compelled to make it a full game for commercial release. So we started developing it in tandem with Dr Harrison and the Blood Crystals, but quickly found it was impossible to work on two projects silmultaneously in only our spare time away from day jobs - so Dr Harrison got put on hold, while our focus turned to маомао.

From day one, we decided to showcase the game as much as possible to get feedback and to spread the word. While taking it to shows, I wanted to give the players that arcade experience, like the ones we had as children. We could not build a moving deluxe cabinet.

like
Sega.
So
using a
large projector
screen with a
hand tracking LEAPmotion
We have put so much love and

controller, and me in a tiger onesie acting as a hype man, it became a bombastic arcade experience that people would look forward to playing at events.

From conception to launch, roughly 3 years has

Dragon Fantasy Adventure.

Below: Does my bum look big in this?

attention into the game, and

hopefully we have managed

to capture some of that old

80s and 90s arcade magic in

MaoMao Castle: A Magical Cat-





#### FUSION

Game : Daytona USA Year : 1995

System: Sega Saturn



A negative perception of Daytona USA became a reality well before its launch - images appeared in many of the magazines of the day with narrative dismissing the look of the game compared to its arcade counterpart. Due to technical difficulties, and a rush to get the game to market for European launch, the AM2 team behind the game reverted to using the console's lower screen resolution of 320x224 in an attempt to raise the game's frame rate.

This kind of news made many question the power of Sega's new console, and with Sony already flaunting it's launch title Ridge Racer on the PS1, the game had a mountain to climb.

BOCITION

On getting the game for the first time, I was hoping the reports I had read were wrong. Unfortunately, the game visually was a bit of a shambles — the frame rate low, there was polygon clipping where scenery would just magically appear on top of the player, the textures were low quality and to add insult to injury for us in the West there was a huge black border at the bottom of the screen. On a positive note, the Daytona USA game was present and was ultimately satisfying to play the sounds of the arcade version (including the voice overs) were also pretty much all present. So not a complete failure as a game, but as a launch title to show-off the capability of Sega's new powerhouse console, and the ease of which it could be coded on, it was a massive fail for Sega and the Saturn's future



## BATTLESTAR GALACIICA



In 1978 as a response to the huge success that was Star Wars, Glen A. Larson created the TV series Battlestar Galactica. Starring Lorne Green as Commander Adama, Richard Hatch as Apollo, Dirk Benedict as Starbuck, it ran from 1978 to 79 totalling 24 episodes before being cancelled. Only to be brought back for 10 more episodes as Galactica 1980 after a write-in campaign persuaded

In the first episode we see the destruction of the Twelve human colonies by their long time foe 'The Cylons', a cybernetic race who's goal is the annihilation of the human race.

Universal Studios to bring it back.

The survivors of this battle gather together to form a 'rag-tag fugitive fleet'

of refugees under the protection of the last remaining great spaceship, the Battlestar Galactica, and flee Cylon-controlled space. Their goal is the legendary lost thirteenth colony world, known as 'Earth', which they hope can help them stand against the pursuing



cybernetic enemy. They set off on an unknown journey searching for Earth while being chased by the Cylons who are determined to wipe out the last few survivors.

The opening monologue from Patrick Macnee was such a great way to start each show you just new what to expect, the last line setting up the story in as much detail as a young child needed. 'Fleeing from the Cylon tyranny, the last Battlestar, Galactica, leads a rag-tag fugitive fleet on a lonely quest: a shining planet known as Earth.'

With the success of the toys produced by Kenner for Star Wars, Mattel snapped up the license for Battlestar Galactica and created a wide selection of toys and products.

Two waves of 3 ¾ inch Action figures were produced, including a few of the key characters and a handful of aliens, but strangely not the main star Apollo (played by Richard Hatch). The rumour being that he didn't want his likeness made into plastic? But who really knows?

Mattel also produced two larger 12 inch figures, Colonial Warrior and a Cylon Centurion. The figures were based on a mould Mattel already had for Captain Lazer and because they were using this existing tooling the figures didn't bare much resemblance to the characters from the show.

Along with the figures a wave of ships where also made, but unlike the Star Wars ships these were created in a smaller scale so the 3 ¾ inch figures couldn't sit inside them. I remember this being a great disappointment to me as a child, the ships instead came with a small one inch high figure that was easily broken and lost. Five vehicles were produced, Cylon Raider, Colonial Viper, Colonial Scarab, Colonial Stellar Probe and the rarest of all the Colonial Land Ram. The Landram was released as the last of the Mattel ships in 1979 and was only available in Canada making it exceedingly hard to find.

All of the ships featured a missile-firing action, that fired out small red projectiles, but due to a tragic accident Mattel had to quickly redesign the missile-firing feature on all the vehicles and re-released the toys with missiles that stayed locked in place from then on. This re-design means that earlier versions of the vehicles with missiles that actually fire are more collectable than the second releases.

Another standout, if slightly, odd toy

produced by Mattel was the Viper Launch
Station. A large hand held toy that bared no
relation to any ship featured in the show, the
launch station contained two foam rubber
colonial vipers that could be fired out on giant
rubber bands. It came with two cardboard
cut-outs of Cylon Raiders for you to aim at,
but the chances of actually hitting them were
almost nil.

Mattel weren't the only ones to make use of the Battlestar Galactica license, a number of small companies had a go as well. The most productive of these was Larami, who created cheap rack toys plastered with the Galactica logo. The toys often had nothing at all to do with



From 1979 until 1992 Universal Studios Hollywood featured the Battle of Galactica ride based on the show. The ride was the first themed attraction to feature audioanimatronic characters outside a Disney park combining live actors with moving robots and lasers.

The ride involved the tour tram being taken aboard a large Cylon ship and menaced by animatronic Cylons, Ovions, and the evil Imperious Leader. The tram is saved by a bunch of Colonial warriors who come in to battle the Cylons and free the earth visitors in a hail of lasers and smoke. By the time the ride was up and running the TV show has already been cancelled which must have been pretty annoying for the theme park.



the show, they were just cheap items with a sticker added to them. Atomic Yo Yo, Binoculars, Cylon Bubble Machine, Cylon Sunglasses, Direction Finder (compass to you and me), ID set, Spectral viewer — you name it, they made it.

Considering Battlestar Galactica ran for such a short period of time, a huge amount of toys and collectables were produced. And with the re-launch of Galactica in 2004 the love for these vintage items has only grown.

> www.youtube/toypolloi @toy polloi www.facebook.com/ToyPolloi @toypolloi www.toypolloi.com

A. The toy was defectly designed and manufactured because: (a) The trigger mechanism on the toy is too close in proximity to the actual loading area and small children are almost required to put their hand or finger over the trigger mechanism while attempting to load the toy. Also, the toy is shaped in such a fashion as to be very similar a penis which almost beckons small children to put the toy in their mouth and when that is done, since the trigger mechanism is too close in proximity to the loading area, the trigger mechanism is usually hit by the children's teeth and the missile expelled. Also, the missile itself is defectly designe in that it is extremely large on one end and extremely small on the other Since the vocal cords of small children are much smaller than the vocal cor of large children, the design of the missile itself tends to help it stick

On December 31, 1978 tragedy struck when a four year old boy from Atlanta, USA fired a missiles from one of the ships into his mouth and choked to death. Mattel were quick to act and in January ordered a recall of all of the ships offering everyone who returned the toys a free Hotwheels car in return.

in the vocal cords and throats of the small children and will not allow it

to go directly into the lungs.

The death of a child from a firing missile caused Kenner to re-evaluate the work they were doing on creating a missile-firing Boba Fett figure already being advertised on the card backs of many Star Wars figures, and is the reason that feature was removed from him, and why the prototypes of Boba Fett with this feature are considered one the Star Wars toy holy grails.

# I AM GAMES ANIMAL

As you can imagine, I have taken part in many video games interviews over the decades, and of all the questions I routinely get asked, the one that raises its head more than any other is undoubtedly - 'what is your favourite game of all-time?'

A valid question of course, after all I have professionally and casually played thousands of games since I first picked up a pong paddle in the 70s and I think it is not too big-headed to suggest that I am also viewed as something of an aficionado on retro gaming, which was of course just 'gaming' when I first encountered many of the machines and software. But. I am proud to be able to report that some 30 years since I first loaded one particular game into my beloved Amiga 500 at the very beginning of the 90s, my opinion has never wavered. My favourite game of all-time is, and quite possibly always will be, the simply wonderful Player

Manager by Anco. A game that remains as much pleasure for me to play now as it was all those years ago, when I first placed the floppy disc into my trusty Commodore in Great Hallingbury. And here is why...

Let me set the scene. Around this time I had begun working for Europe's largest mail order gaming company, Inter Mediates, or Special Reserve as most of their

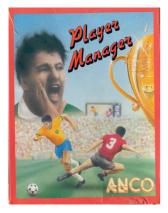
customers knew them. I joined the company as a deputy editor for their subscriber magazines, and within a year was to become the company's publishing manager. The atmosphere at our offices in Sawbridgeworth was always buzzing. We were a very young team of enthusiastic gamers who were delighted to be earning a crust doing what we

loved. And every lunchtime our 'hour off' centred around one game in particular — Kick Off 2 by Anco. For my money, Kick Off 2 on the Amiga remains the greatest football simulation ever made. It took a lot of time and skill to master, as the ball doesn't simply stick to your toes, like in many other football games at the time, and indeed many since. There was a genuine feeling of inertia to master, and intricacies like headers, overhead kicks, curved shots, trapping the ball etc. all had to be mastered by either perfect timing or pulling back or sideways on a joystick at just the right moment. It was a football game for real gaming purists. And to this day it remains so.

However, before Kick Off 2 took the sports sim world by storm, there had been its predecessor, the slightly more basic, but just as much fun

**Below:** Dave showing off his favourite game of all time.





Above: The packaging of the game, plus the loading screen of Player Manager

Kick Off. Kick Off didn't appear to differ much from its more polished sequel. It used the same control systems and pitch 'radar' at the top of the screen, so you could tell where you and other players were on the field of play, it just had a slightly more basic gameplay to it, and a number of quirks that were worked out by the time its bigger brother arrived on the scene.

But between the wonderfully playable Kick Off. and its absolutely sublime sequel, Anco decided to do something completely unprecedented - they brought out a football management game that used the playing system of the original game, but now allowed you to build and control your own club as well as be a player in your own team. Created by Dino Dini and Steve Screech, and released by Anco in 1990, Player Manager was the first game to combine managing a team with playing matches out as a single player. To this end you could choose to just pick your team and tactics and watch the game



play out, play as yourself in your team in one position, or control the whole team for yourself. The result was mind blowing. No one had ever done anything like this before, nor has anybody pulled off anything similar since, it set an incredible benchmark that quite simply has never been bettered.

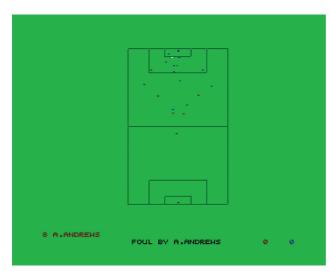
For anyone reading this who hasn't seen or played Player Manager, the game begins initially by creating a unique playing environment for the player. A process that takes around 15 minutes or so. perfect for going downstairs to make a cup of tea. While many of the team names are

similar to real life ones, all the players within the game are completely made up and unique every time vou reset the playing environment. Each character also has a unique set of attributes that affect how they play and develop within the game, and therefore their value. These attributes also reflect in their cost and value to the team, and there is a busy transfer market to dip into, when you have the cash. Although in the early days the top players quite simply won't be interested in signing for vour team

For you yourself, you begin

Below: Have a cuppa whilst the game environment is created.





Above: In a rush to watch the game, pick the FAST gameplay.

as Alex Reeves, but you can change that name to your own at the beginning, as well as the team name itself. You will be given international standard stats, although you don't get to choose what position your player plays in, and you will also be an older player, towards the end of your career.

Hence you taking this lower division Player Manager role. So you only have a few seasons of usefulness as a player to the club.

if things go to plan, before you hang up your boots and just run things.

With each season all your players' stats and attributes will either improve or drop depending on age and development, and as you climb the leagues you will need to keep bringing in better and stronger players. You get to

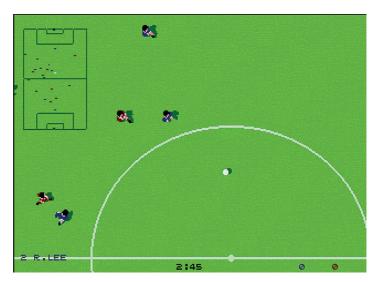
control finances, transfers and training, and of course you need to keep both the supporters and the board happy as you grow and progress.

The heartbeat of the game however, sits in its gameplay. The management side of things is gripping, but fairly simple and quick, thanks to the small number

of teams in each division. but once you take your team out onto the pitch you get to feel a genuine involvement with your decisions. The fast players are pacy, the high passing stat players keep possession and top defenders tackle effectively. And either by playing as them, or with them, you soon develop a 'feel' for your team and what you do and don't need to improve upon. And, when your own player character scores a winner in a cup game, well, it all goes next level for your feelings of involvement.

It is incredible how the Kick Off game engine makes the gameplay feel so true to the off-field decisions you have been making. Yellow and Red Cards are dished out, players get injured and tired, and the stereo crowd effect means that one set of fans cheer from one side of the monitor, while the others cheer from

Below: The more tradittional top-down view of the game!







Above: Dave celebrates victory as he checks out his finances.

the opposite speaker. There are so many small and simple touches like this, that largely go unnoticed, but undoubtedly help add to the overall quality of the game itself.

As if all of this wasn't enough, when Kick Off 2 came along, and with it an array of subsequent data disc add-ons, like 'Final Whistle' and 'Winning Tactics', we all soon discovered that we could take our Player Manager experiences even further by taking our saved teams and importing them into the more advanced game engine, so we could choose exciting new options like different playing kits, weather conditions and tactics etc. and most importantly, we could now actually play our lovingly built single player Player Manager teams against each other, controlled by ourselves or by the game's AI as we discover who truly had built the greatest team. My side was called Red Star, in case you were wondering.

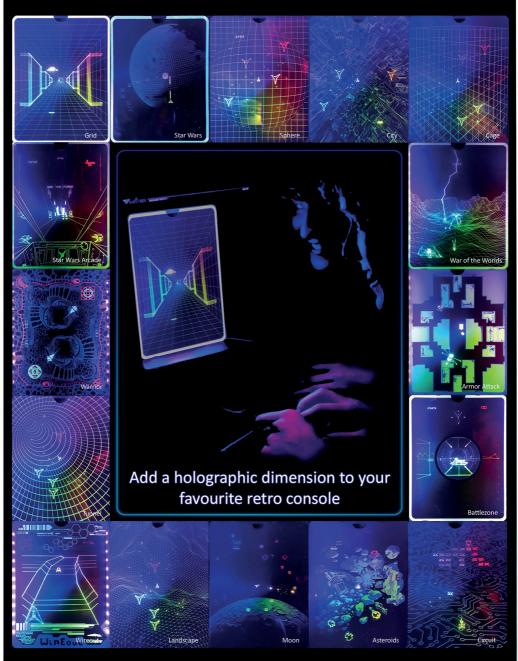
Deceptively simple, amazingly addictive, supremely playable, in my opinion Player Manager by Anco remains to this day the greatest game that I have ever played.

And, as I write this I am actively seeking out an Amiga 500 and the game disks so I can reignite my love affair with the game, and indeed the whole Kick Off series, all over again.

In fact, once I am up and running, you are more than welcome to come down for a game and see what the fuss was all about.

#### UV OVERLAYS

#### FOR VECTREX



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### BARRY MORSE FROM THE RETRO SHED TALKS MSX — A SYSTEM HE INITIALLY GOT FOR XMAS IN 1984.

1984 was a cracking year! In the cinema we were treated to the likes of Ghostbusters, Gremlins, Temple of Doom and The Karate Kid. In the UK charts we listened to Prince, Wham, Depeche Mode and Tears for Fears. Oh and I had a chrome Aero Burner BMX. Good times indeed!

However, 1984 was epic for me for another reason — my parents finally agreed that I could have a 'proper' computer for Christmas after my relentless quest to make them understand that the Philips G7000, that I was bought in 1981, was not a real computer but just an ageing games console.

Most of my friends at school had Commodore 64s, Sinclair Spectrums and BBC Micro's (well the rich kids did!) and because we weren't a particularly well off family at the time, the budget was set at around £100.

This meant that the Commodore 64, that I had my heart set on, was out of the running and I didn't want a Spectrum as it didn't have a proper keyboard. Christmas 1984 was looming, so I started to look at what my options were and for some reason I decided I wanted the new Commodore Plus 4.

I'd seen some adverts for it and I thought it looked really cool in its dark grey livery. It had a proper keyboard, looked pretty stylish and I'd heard good things about this new-fangled all-in-one 'TED'

chip. To be honest, I loved the look of the thing and in 1984, Commodore was still a trusted brand. I had no idea that the Plus 4 was totally incompatible with the Commodore 64 so none of my favourite C64 titles would ever run on it anyway.

Come December 1984, we embarked on our yearly Christmas trip into Birmingham to look in the 'big shops' and find a Plus 4 to look at. We wandered into Laskey's electrical store on Corporation Street (remember Laskeys?). The salesman knew his stuff and showed us the various computers on display, including the Plus 4, which had



now dropped to a reasonable £99.99.

Then he dropped the bombshell question, 'Will you be wanting to play games on this computer?' Yep, silly question right? 'Well yes and use it for homework of course!', was my guarded response — myparents were listening!

'Well, in that case, if it was my money, I wouldn't touch the Plus 4. It's not the best games playing machine out there and it doesn't run Commodore 64 software. You might want to look at this instead – it's the same price £99.99 and a much better deal', he replied. He then led us over to a really cool looking computer — it was the Toshiba HX-10 MSX. After seeing some software run on it, and



the fact that you got an entire starter kit for your money — that was it. Love at first sight!

Christmas 1984 was awesome. I unboxed a computer that changed my life and is probably responsible Above and Below: The Toshiba HX-10 MSX computer with the arcade conversion Nemesis running via cartridge in the image below.





for the job I do today. I was never disappointed with my choice and although we have a Commodore Plus 4 now in our collection, it's not a patch on the MSX. Whoever that sales chap was, I would shake his hand and buy him drinks all night if I ever met him again!

The funny thing is, looking back, I'd never heard of the MSX range of computers, never mind the Toshiba HX-10! But where did this 8-bit Japanese offering come from? Where did it all begin?

The thing to understand here is 'MSX' was not a computer as such — it was a standard. MSX computers were mainly made by a range of quality Japanese electrical giants such as Sony, Panasonic, Toshiba, Canon,

Sharp and Mitsubishi — to name a few. And although they looked different, they were also all the same. The premise was a good one — anything made or written for the MSX standard would work on any MSX computer, software or peripherals. Considering there were so many disparate 8-bit systems on the market in the early 80s, the driving force





behind MSX was brilliant.

The MSX standard began in 1983 and was the brainchild of Kazuhiko Nishi, who was the head of ASCII Corporation and also friend of a certain Bill Gates. Kazuhiko ended up working for Microsoft in Japan later on.

There is some debate as to what 'MSX' actually stands for, but the two most popular definitions are either 'Microsoft Extended Basic' which was the flavour of BASIC shipped with each computer, or 'Machines with Software exchangeability'.

Under the hood of every MSX computer you would find a Zilog Z80 CPU running at 3.58 MHz, a Texas Instruments TMS9918 graphics chip and a General Instruments AY-3-8910 sound chip. Most MSX computers came with a minimum of 64K of RAM. It also featured the Atari standard 9 pin joystick ports — something sorely missing from the Commodore Plus 4, so finding compatible joysticks

Above and Below: The SONY HB-75 MSX computer.

for the MSX was a breeze. Most models came with a cassette port, audio out, composite or SCART connectivity, RF out,





Centronics printer port and at least one cartridge slot. Everything you needed was included.

And as mentioned above, each MSX came with Microsoft Extended Basic in ROM and a very good version of BASIC it was too. As long as the software, printer, disk drive or anything else for that matter had the moniker 'MSX on the box — it would work with your machine. Well, most of the time. There were some slight incompatibilities between the brands, but nothing too serious. On the whole, it all worked nicely together.

Perhaps the biggest problem being an MSX owner in

the UK was the lack of software availability.

As it was predominantly a Japanese platform, good games were thin on the ground and many of the cassette based games were poorly ported Spectrum and other Z80 coded games — which often ran slower than they did on the Spectrum due to the way MSX computers addressed video RAM. You could find some games on the high street in stores such as WHSmith, Boots and certain newsagents, but finding good games was a problem. There were only three kids in my school who actually owned an MSX, so playground swaps was a non-starter!

Aside from the lazy ported games, there were a lot of natively coded software which really showed off what the computer could do. Some of the better cassette based games were classics such as an excellent port of Elite by Mr Micro. Boulderdash 1 & 2. International Karate, Knight Lore, Ghostbusters, Trailblazer and a host of others. You could always fill your boots with the Mastertronic £1.99 range by saving lunch money of course, but these were often a gamble.

In my opinion, the best reason to own an MSX was the range of cartridges produced by Konami. These were of excellent quality and featured some of the best conversions of much loved Konami games such as Nemesis. Salamander. Hyper Sports, Green Beret, Time Pilot, Castlevania and many more. Before you all shout 'What about Metal Gear?' - nope! Metal Gear didn't debut until 1987 and that was on the MSX2 platform, not the original MSX.

Around 1985, my favourite arcade game at the time was Nemesis (Gradius) and I was absolutely thrilled when we visited the local dealership one afternoon and there was the MSX version of Nemesis running on the demo computer. It looked and sounded incredible. It was snapped up there and then for a reasonable £15.99. I still have that very boxed cartridge to this day. It was far better than the other 8-bit versions that came out in 1987 and the look of envy when mates came over to play it was brilliant. Suddenly owning this rare Japanese rarity wasn't so daft



after all. Nemesis 1 and 2 are excellent MSX titles and I thoroughly urge you to go and have a play if you're a fan of space shooters.

In later years the MSX2, MSX2+ and the MSX TurboR platforms were released in 1985, 1988 and 1990 respectively, although those were never officially released in the UK. Besides by 1990 I was the proud owner of a Commodore Amiga and had left MSX far behind and probably in the loft.

MSX was my first 'proper' computer and first 8-bit love. Although it never really had great success in the UK, it remains one of those systems that most retro heads want

in their collection and rightly so. It's a fabulous machine and you can get them at quite reasonable prices today if you hunt around. If you can get hold of a multi-cartridge for it, you are onto a winner. I still have the original HX-10 my parents bought me in 1984, plus a Sony HitBit, which is a gorgeous machine as you'd expect from Sony.

There are so many great games to explore on the platform, it would be a crime not to get your feet wet and dabble in the world of MSX. The computer that was designed to end the compatibility wars once and for all. Had it been launched a year or so earlier, it may have achieved just that!

**Below:** A collection of game cartridges — Nemesis 3 game above





By May 1991, the 8-bit market was running down fast, and CRASH had turned into more of a pamphlet with a cassette attached. 'I felt committed to giving editor Nick Roberts the best possible

covers to compensate, even though the artwork would inevitably be buried under the cover lines and cassette,' Oliver says looking back.

'You would've thought everyone had got fed up of 3D arcade games like this; they were all the rage a few years back,' writes Nick. 'I for one can't get enough of them, especially when they are as good as Wreckers.'

At 93%, the Denton
Designs/Audiogenic
games was described
on the cover as a slimebusting smash! 'Wonderful,
I thought! I love painting

Right: Gloop! Need I say more!

gloop as much as gore,' Oli says. 'A good old-fashioned action hero warmed with a futuristic blaster, fighting his way through bright green slime was just the thing to warm up The weather had in fact been pretty dreary through 1991, and March when Oli was painting the May cover was no exception.

'The other uplifting item for the issue, was a centrefold poster of ThunderJaws, which was effectively a preview of the Domark release of the Atari arcade game, and I enjoyed painting that as well. I thought the splashy water complemented Wreckers' gloop very nicely!'





# CRESSFIRE

WITH A BLISTERED TRIGGER FIGURE, CHRIS WILKINS RECALLS THE GAME CROSSFIRE FROM HIS CHILDHOOD

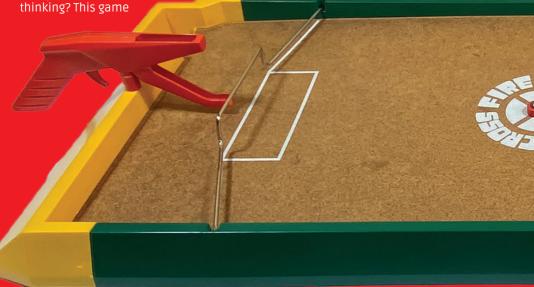
As a parent, one thing I soon came to realise with toys is that bits of them get everywhere.

To this very day we still find parts in carrier bags, drawers or in boxes in the attic where the rest of the game has been given or thrown away many, many years before. So when my parents gave me Crossifire as a gift, what were they thinking? This game

is made up of 2 guns, a playing board and hundreds upon hundreds of ball bearings.

I am sure they
must be still finding
these metallic
spheres all these
years later in the back
of their kitchen cupboards
or in the pantry or in deeply
woven rugs and wondering

Above: Those pesky, shiny ball bearings. Step on one of those coming down the stairs and it will be a moment you will never forget!





Left: The game with its now rather worn box. Looks like the bearings are not where they should be - be afraid!

what they are! aim is to score a goal against Crossfire is a 2-player game where each player has a fixed plastic gun that can

be moved left or right - the weapon is loaded manually from the top with ball bearings and by pressing the fire button, a ball is shot out of the device in the direction it is facing. The

your opposition by shooting the bearings at a puck on the playing field and attempting to get it into the opposition's goal area — of course, they have the same objective as you.

This game offers frantic fun as you find yourself continuously loading up your gun with the bearings that have been shot by the opposition, only to shoot them back. I remember many a blister on my 'shoot' finger on my right hand as you look to unload as many bearings as possible at the puck to keep it moving towards the other half of the small playing field and away from your goal in

the hope of scoring.

A new version has been released by MB since this 1970s original came out — the new one has more than one puck and a much smaller. rounded playing board. It looks just as much fun as its big bother, plasters on shooting finger at the ready.







# 



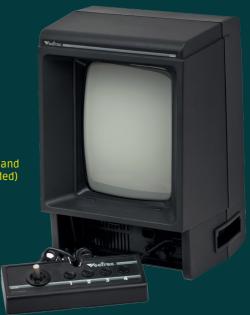
### **TOP** TEN HOMEBREW>>

The Top 10 homebrew games to play on the Vectrex

#### by Mat Allen

One thing that can definitely be said about the Vectrex is that its current popularity belies its incredibly short commercial lifespan. While only 28 original titles were published, in the more than twenty years since John Dondzila tentatively released Vector Vaders there have been approaching a hundred

homebrew releases and the buzz (pun intended) surrounding the console has arguably never been louder. Mat Allen is here to take you through ten of the best homebrew titles for the console.



#### 01 // Protector

Protector was the first Vectrex homebrew title that made people sit up and exclaim 'that's not possible'. While those boundaries continue to be pushed further, see Robot Arena and the soon-to-be-released Vectorblade, at the time there was much online chatter that the initial preview videos were fake. How little they knew. Initially released as a hundred-unit deluxe limited edition, and later bundled with YASI in its unlimited form, Protector is a full-throttle Defender clone that apes its arcade inspiration in both speed and difficulty.

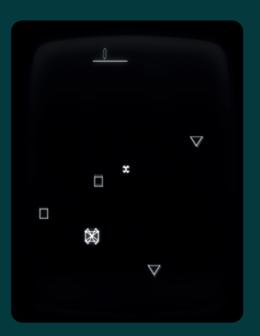
The four-button controller was also ideal in recreating the feel of the original, allowing for precise thrust and reverse motions to keep you one step ahead of those nasty Landers. The cartridge was also one of the first with on-board saving and with the limited edition, granted access to a secret sub-game once you achieved a certain score.



#### 02 // Thrust

As a spiritual successor to Gravitar, Thrust was originally programmed for the BBC Micro before being ported to home computers, the C64 version notable due to its tight keyboard-only controls, thumping Rob Hubbard soundtrack and ludicrously bargain £1.99 price. Ville Krumlinde's conversion to a format befitting its graphical demands maintains everything that made the original work, especially the controls, gravity implementation and limpet gun AI, and backed it up with a stonking AY chip version of said Hubbard music and raucous sound effects.

In conclusion, it can be argued this is the definitive version of the game. Multiple difficulty levels, time attack mode, extra levels on the hardest difficulty setting, and a bonus game called ZSB add to the package. The source code, to aid new programmers, is readily available to download online.



#### 03 // VECTOR PILOT

Good things come to those who wait, cue Guinness advert. Kristof Tuts' output has meant waiting years between releases, but boy is it worth it. In this case here, I shouldn't even need to tell you what game this ports over to the Vectrex

Everything about the original is present and correct — the time zones, the enemies, the jingles, the logic, the scoring — coupled with a bonus time zone, varying difficulty levels and unlockable craft in the process. The most staggering aspect is there is barely any slowdown despite copious planes and bullets flying about the screen, only chugging a little when you have bonus formations AND a rescue parachute present.

If you have any hankering for Time Pilot in the slightest, you owe it to yourself to purchase this immediately, it's that good.



#### 04 // Star Sling

There's a Yoda meme floating somewhere here given the game is merely 4k in size, bringing it in line with many original titles. Star Sling is a fairly unique styled game, the closest approximation being Atari's rare coin-op Quantum and once deeper in it's not completely similar although both require you to enclose objects to score points.

The aim of the game is to manoeuvre your craft about the screen, avoiding the objects floating around, and destroy them by encasing them in your star sling. Matching objects score points, mismatched objects explode to create new objects, which may be a deliberate ploy. It's a fun, highly challenging title that is merely limited by your own skill level.

The original boxed release was an extremely limited 25 copies, so it's thankful there's an unlimited version also available.



#### 05 // Debris Revisited

Not all games on the Vectrex are vector based, both Debris titles from Martijn Wenting are in this camp.

The sequel Revisited is featured here, being leaps above the original in terms of gameplay balance, level design and challenge. Sixteen levels of shooting action start off reasonably gentle to allow you to become comfortable with the mechanics while gradually turning up the dial to 11 by the time you reach the end. It will take some serious skill to best this title! That's before even mentioning the huge end-of-level bosses that await you and the 80s style chiptune soundtrack.

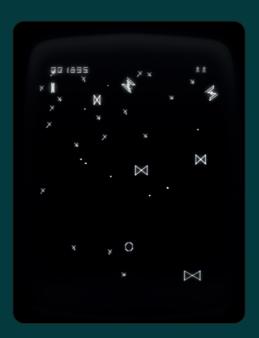
To round matters out, there is a bonus sub-game waiting to be discovered and the use of codes to register your high scores online.



#### 06 // Robot Arena

Eugene Jarvis' early arcade titles often rank near the top of classic coin-op lists, and as we've already covered Defender here via Protector, it's now time to focus attention on Robotron. Robot Arena take the basics — twin stick control for movement and firing, the requirement to stay alive in trying circumstances, a steep challenge — and runs with its own ideas, adding timers to some levels, new and inventive enemies, air turning blue Al, and a level jump facility.

The sheer pace of the game once you venture a few rounds in coupled with the number of objects in motion will have you believing this is not running on a Vectrex. The only downer, and it's quite a severe one, is that it's only available currently either on ultra-rare standalone cartridge or the almost as rare VecFever device.



#### 07 // Galaxy Wars/Space Launcher

Two games for the price of one, both based upon 1979 coin-ops released in the wake of the huge success of Taito's Space Invaders. However don't let the fact that they are 40 years old put you off, because if you are looking for a challenge and love score attack type titles, then both of these will be right up your alley.

Galaxy Wars has you guiding missiles to destroy enemy UFOs while avoiding meteors floating about, while Space Launcher sees you attempting to dock at the top of screen and then make it back down to the surface while avoiding and shooting enemies for points.

There are plenty of hidden bonuses and scoring patterns to discover, while each wave gradually turns the screw up difficulty wise. Something a bit different that the Vectrex once again delivers in style.



#### 08 // Space Frenzy

A lot of vector-based arcade titles were converted to the Vectrex back in the day, but some fell by the wayside even though they would have been more than achievable. And not requiring an add-on yoke controller, here's looking at you Star Wars! Space Frenzy is an unabashed clone of Space Fury, even down to the in-game speech and taunting alien if you happen to plug in a VecVox supporting device.

There are some changes, which make life both easier and harder, such as greater collision detection on cruiser segments and the ability to continually choose which ship add-on to dock with after each wave.

The only thing Space Frenzy really lacks is the original's colour vectors. This was John Dondzila's last release for the Vectrex having started the whole scene more than a decade earlier.



#### 09 // Release

Older retro consoles are often a breeding ground for simple yet addictive ideas, and this release, a port from the author of the VIDE emulator, is yet another example. It is literally a one-button title, holding down the button expands your shield around your base and when released it explodes, destroying all enemies touching its boundary layers. Sounds simple, huh? It definitely is not, where multiple enemy types constantly attack your base and one mistake is fatal and game over. Helping you are some orbiting stars for bonus points (needed for big scores) and mystery marks that temporarily improve your shield.

Release maintains an excellent balance between frustration and wanting to have one more go to improve your score, encourages pattern learning for the attack, and is accompanied by a tension inducing soundtrack.

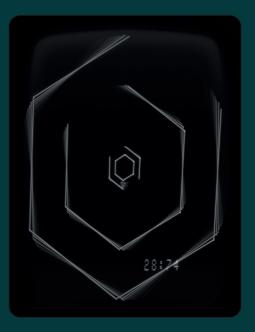


#### 10 // Vectrexagon

Terry Cavanagh's high octane twitchfest for iOS/Android may not have been the most obvious choice to port over to the vector wonder machine, but that wasn't going to stop programmer Andreas Gustafsson from trying!

The change in playing view from horizontal to vertical alters some of the dynamics, and the limitations on the Vectrex processing power means it doesn't quite run as fast or with as many lines as the original. Despite this it is still a cracking one-more-go type game to get your teeth stuck into and subsequently turn the air blue after each mistake, bolstered by an absolutely thumping soundtrack. Quickly followed by starting again.

The controls in Vectrexagon are responsive, either via joystick or buttons, and collision detection fair, in fact sometimes you might just get away with the odd mistake.



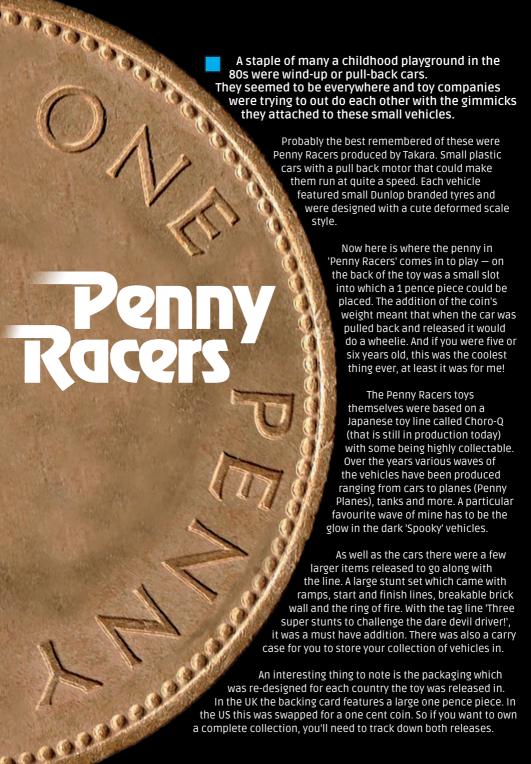
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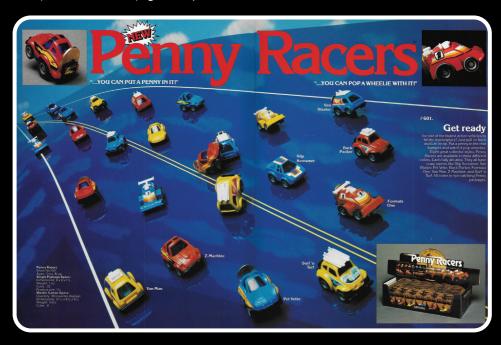
LJN, an American toy company and video game publisher at the time, were also getting in on the mini car action, they already had a larger range of battery powered cars called Rough Riders, but had also produced a cheaper smaller set of cars called Stunt Riders. These, like Penny Racers, could do wheelies using a weighted removable rear tire, but they also had the ability to do side wheelies using cones moulded into the wheel hubs. It was quite a challenge to get the cars to do these side wheelies as you needed a nice flat surface to ride them on, and a steady hand. LJN made great use of this feature even adding it to a small version of E.T.'s Spaceship from the film, turning it into a 'Stunt Spaceship'. I don't remember that scene in the movie.

Taking it a stage further Knickerbocker brought Wrist Racers to the market. These were wind-up cars that came in a nifty wristband pack that you could wear. A pull out ramp allowed the cars to be launched directly from your arm — just wind them up, set the ramp and press the release button to watch the car fly across the room. As the advert said, 'You can rev them, You can race them, right from your wrist'



and you really could.

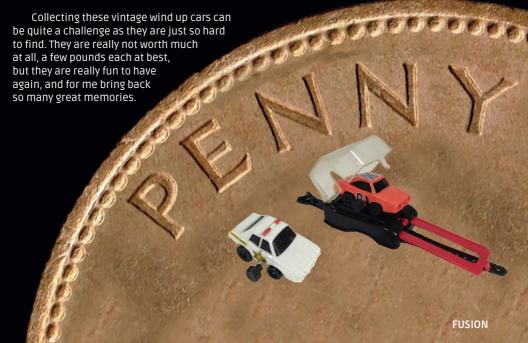
Knickerbocker even managed to snag some big TV license tie-ins, The A-team, Knightrider, and even the General Lee and Roscoe's Police car from The Dukes of Hazzard got the Wrist Racer treatment.





McDonalds got in on the mini motorised car craze in 1984 with the release of four themed cars available in their Happy Meals. These were made by Ertl although often didn't have a makers mark printed on the bottom. The cars were made to match the style of the drivers whose little heads poked out of the top. Ronald McDonald, Hamburglar, Mayor McCheese, and Officer Big Mac all featured. I remember desperately wanting to get these but they were only available for a week each, and in those days going to McDonalds was a rare treat. In the end I only managed to get Hamburglar, and lets face it, he was the best one.







TELLS US A TALE
FROM HIS TIME AT
SENSIBLE SOFTWARE

I'm a big fan of the Sega Mega Drive since acquiring one from a Japanese importer not long after release. The machine felt like a proper home arcade system and over the years I've played many games from all regions on it, all thanks I might add to a mod Sensi Co-Founder Chris Yates made which enabled me to buy titles in confidence without that dastardly region lock spoiling my gaming fun.

a 50/60hz switch to remove the border when playing UK games. I'd heard this could be done but I wasn't fully privy to how it was achieved — he did and promptly offered to do the mod for me.

I cautiously agreed and nervously watched as my beloved SEGA machine was disassembled before my very eyes, hoping it would survive! Suffice to say Chris performed the mod successfully and after the initial horror of seeing puffs of soldering smoke emanating from the motherboard my machine

emerged all the better for it with an unassuming switch mounted atop the case. I nervously powered it up, the LED glowed red and the Sega logo appeared on my Philips 8833 CRT monitor, it worked — to my relief! Phew!

In hindsight a simple mod, but it was way before the days of instructional YouTube videos and websites detailing such techie hacks. In 1991 this was proper hardcore hardware geekery and another great memory during my days as Sensible Stoo. Mega Drive modding had never been so much fun!

To my delight a few months after I joined the team, Chris took delivery of a Mega Drive development kit which for a SEGA fanboy like me was a wondrous sight to behold. It was cool seeing how it worked and we often had conversations about the hardware inside and what it could do. During one of these chats Chris asked if I knew my machine could be region modded with



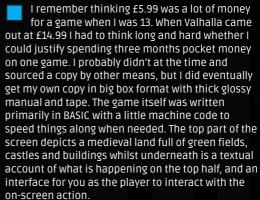




### FUSION

Game : Valhalla Year : 1983

System: ZX Spectrum



The main aim of the game is to collect six mythical objects scattered around the land — as you explore you bump into numerous fantastical characters, some with good intentions, most with none. If you help the good guys, only more good will surely come of it. Help the bad guys — well more fool you. Valhalla is one of the first truly animated graphical adventures on the ZX Spectrum and was a big step forwards from the likes of The Hobbit. It should be noted though, that gamer interaction is optional — if you sit back and leave the game to its own devices, the characters interact with each other and go about their daily chores. So is this a game or an interactive movie? I will let you decide.

↑Skadi

↑you Idun↑



# A guide for the Uninitiated

If you were born much before 1990, there is every chance that your knowledge and experience of the Pokémon franchise will differ vastly from mine. You may well see it as a silly product of commercialism, intended just to empty out parent's wallets, and I can't really defend that as there was certainly no shortage of Pokémon products in the mid-nineties — everything from bedsheets, cereals, action figures, trading cards and even pasta all adorned with the smiling yellow face of a cartoon mouse named Pikachu. Pokémon supposedly tops the

list of the highest-grossing media franchises of all time, surprisingly higher than gargantuan franchises like Star Wars or Batman, both of which have enjoyed

success for far longer than Pokémon,

but the more I think about the amount of Pokémon themed tat I owned back then (and still do), it's easy to see why.

Before it became
the massive cultural
phenomenon that it's
known as today, it all
began with an idea for
a video game on the
Nintendo Game Boy. And
that idea belonged to Satoshi
Tajiri. Born in 1965, Satoshi Tajiri

grew up in Machida, a rural suburb in western Tokyo where he would spend his free time in the fields, woodland and ponds near his home exploring and collecting insects. As the metropolitan sprawl of Tokyo paved over the woods and fields, Tajiri's attention turned to arcades where he fell in love with video games, particularly Taito's 1978 classic Space Invaders.

In 1981 he decided to publish a fanzine called Game Freak, a handwritten publication

that focused on the arcade scene, packed full of useful tips on how to beat games and achieve high scores.

As the magazine was moderately successful, more contributors came forward to work on it including artist Ken Sugimori.
As time went on, Tajiri began to feel that many new gaming releases just didn't have the level of quality that they ought to have, so Tajiri and

Sugimori decided that they were going to make their own video games, and after studying Nintendo's Family BASIC programming package and purchasing the necessary hardware to allow for

game development, the Game Freak magazine evolved into a software company in 1989 and swiftly pitched an arcade-style title named Quinty to Namco, which was published later that year on the Nintendo Famicom.

In 1990, Satoshi Tajiri saw some kids playing a multiplayer game using a link cable on a pair of Nintendo Game Boy consoles. Perhaps down to his childhood love of bug collecting, he instantly envisioned insects crawling up and down the connecting cable, and it gave him







an idea for a new video game. Deciding to name the game 'Capsule Monsters', the basic idea for the game would be about catching and trading creatures. It would take many attempts at pitching the idea to Nintendo before legendary developer Shigeru Miyamoto decided to step in and try and help sell the concept to them. Eventually, they agreed to fund the project, and after changing the name from 'Capsule Monsters' to 'Pocket Monsters' (or Pokémon) due to licensing issues, the game was fleshed out over the next six years.

In Pokémon, the player would play as a young boy travelling around a world, capturing a variety of monsters to train and battle with other trainers. As the creatures grew stronger through battling, some would 'evolve' into different and more ferocious-looking creatures. Each of the eight cities that the player would visit in the game would feature a gym where a gym leader would reside, a much stronger Pokémon trainer that if defeated would earn the player a Pokémon league badge. After earning eight badges, the player could take on the 'Elite Four', a small collective of trainers famed for their legendarily strong monsters. Amidst battling trainers and gym leaders and trying to catch all 150 Pokémon, the player would have to contend with a variety of sidequests in order to progress to new cities. from vengeful undead spirits that would need putting to rest; helping a ship captain overcome seasickness; aiding an inventor who had an unfortunate mishap involving a teleporter and stray Pokémon DNA as well as taking on criminal organisations, all of the while trying to play catch up with the rival kid-nextdoor — an arrogant and obnoxious trainer who always seems to be one badge ahead of you!

The game took six gruelling years to make, wrought with financial struggles. Even though

Tajiri didn't take a salary, opting to live off his father's income, it always seemed like bankruptcy was inevitable. Somehow, the team struggled on until the game was finished. It was released as two separate games for the Nintendo Game Boy — Red Version and Green Version. Out of the 150 Pokémon available to catch, 11 monsters were unique to each game, requiring players to trade with a link cable if they wanted to complete their collection, encouraging a social aspect to the game. There were also some monsters that could only evolve into more powerful monsters if they were traded.

Pokémon wasn't a roaring success from the onset. The Game Boy was already seven years old when Red and Green versions released in Japan on February 27th, 1996 and sales were initially slow. It was only when rumours of a secret 151st Pokémon started to cause a little buzz that sales began to increase. Popular kids magazine CoroCoro announced an offer to distribute the legendary 151st Pokémon Mew to just twenty applicants, whilst the number of



people that applied was close to 80,000!

As sales picked up, Pokémon Blue was released, a revised version of the games with improved graphical sprites and sounds. Then came all of the other products, an animated series, a manga series, trading cards and all the rest.

The Pokémon games didn't appear in the West until 1998 when Pokémon Red and Blue versions were released simultaneously with all of the other forms of Pokémon media. So like The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles a decade before, Pokémon seemed to just descend and was everywhere, all at once.

I can appreciate that parents probably did get sick of the sight of Pikachu and the massive amount of Pokémon themed products on store shelves. But for me, Pokémon was primarily about the games. When I first clapped eyes on Ken Suigimori's watercolour artwork of a fiery red dragon on the front cover of Pokémon

Red version, I was instantly drawn in. I loved monsters and battles, and I was always collecting things like M.U.S.C.L.E figures and Monster in my Pocket toys, and all of a sudden there was a game that fed into my love of collecting. The tagline for Pokémon back then was 'Gotta Catch 'Em All! so I was being actively encouraged to go forth and collect each and every monster! On top of all the collecting and battling, the game was also an adventure that really drew me in. Getting to go out and explore caves and forests was liberating, and beneath the story was a simple yet solid Japanese roleplaying game. Battles would level up your Pokémon and make

them stronger, but every Pokémon would have an elemental type. For example, Pikachu is an electric type, so his thunder attacks would decimate water-based foes, but would do nothing against rock-type enemies. Pokémon was the first game that taught me that sometimes tactics could beat brute strength.

It's hard to believe that it's been over twenty years since the original games were released here in the West. I've recently started playing some of the Pokémon games released for the Game Boy Advance which I missed out on due to them being released during my teenage vears when I was doing my best to seem a bit cooler than I really was — and I'm having a blast with them. So if in 1998 you missed out on the original games and you want to try out a casual RPG that isn't overly demanding with your time, and you enjoy the idea of collecting monsters and battling them to become a world champion, go and try either Pokémon Red or Blue. They've been remade a few times now, with the most recent incarnation being Let's GO Pikachu/Eevee on the Nintendo Switch — if you have a Nintendo 3DS kicking around the original versions of Red and Blue can be found on the Nintendo eShop. For purists who would like to play on original hardware, cartridges can be found for around £10 on the secondary market, but be warned, after twenty years the internal batteries which power the cartridges ability to retain a save file have usually run dry so you'll want to solder in a new battery before playing.

Following the success of Red and Blue, Pokémon Yellow was released in the West in 1999. It was essentially the exact same

adventure as the Red and Blue versions, but instead of choosing one of three Pokémon to begin the adventure with, you were given a Pikachu, much like how Ash the protagonist of the cartoon show was also given Pikachu. This version of the game added a few characters from the show as well as overhauling the Pokémon sprites so that they looked more like their in-show appearance.

Following on from Yellow, the first sequels to Red and Blue appeared in the West in 2000/2001 in the form of Pokémon Gold and Silver. Set three years after Red/Blue, the game featured 100 new monsters to catch and a whole new part of the world to explore. After beating all the gym leaders and the Elite Four in this game you could even travel back to Kanto, the area from Red/Blue, and take on the Gym leaders there. This blew my mind back then as I'd never played a game where you could revisit locations from a previous game.

Silver and Gold also came equipped with an internal clock which allowed a day and night feature, so if you wanted to catch nocturnal Pokémon you'd have to play at night. I recall a few occasions where I tried to explain this to my parents and that I couldn't possibly entertain the notion of bedtime when there were Pokémon to catch — it usually fell on deaf ears!

Since then there have been new games in the core series every few years (as well as many spin-off titles). The formula hasn't changed a whole lot since the early days, which is something that has drawn both criticism



and praise from fans of the series, but the series must have done something right for it to have seen the measure of success that it has enjoyed the past two decades. Although I've become less familiar with the series over the last number of years, I could never forget just how perfect those first few games were.

It's far too easy to see Pokémon as a mere marketing ploy, designed to unburden parents of their hard-earned cash, but it shouldn't be forgotten that before all of the merchandise it was simply a very enjoyable pair of video games.

Were it not for their success and the ideas of an innovative, bug-collecting, magazine-writer, all of it would not have been possible. Pokemon Red and Blue are the foundations in which a multi-billion dollar empire was built.





As far as Indie games go, Little
Nightmares is hands down one of
the best and it quickly became one
of my favourite games ever. The Tim
Burtonesque art style is endearing and
spooky enough that even a glimpse of
the cover would pique your interest.
I'm not the biggest fan of horror games
but Little Nightmares proves that
with good storytelling and character
design, your game doesn't need to be
chockfull of jump-scares to be scary.

You follow the story of Six, a tiny girl in a yellow raincoat as she tries to escape the Maw, a gigantic boat-like structure with no clear purpose (at least not one that makes any sense yet). As she travels through the levels she needs to narrowly avoid being crushed and or eaten by the Maw's less than pleasant residents.

82











Little Nightmares is very clearly inspired by the Studio Ghibli film Spirited away and The City of Lost Children but it takes that inspiration and moulds the world of the Maw into something very new and wonderful.

Honestly, the atmosphere in this game is astounding — the way the Maw rocks from side to side and the constant creaking and other eerie sound effects. A nice touch is the way that the only light Six has when it gets too dark is a small lighter to brighten the area just around her. The music really ties everything together, it's so haunting and childlike at times but loud and jarring at others — it is beautiful and horrifying all at the same time, much like the game itself. The developers have used a lot of music boxes and children humming to make up the majority of the OST and personally I love it — to make use of such innocent-sounding instruments in this uncomfortable setting, fills you with a sense of dread and fear.

Of course, a game like this has some flaws but they're mainly to do with the mechanics. The controls are a little strange and a bit hard to get used to and sometimes Six will glitch, but the great quality of the game is pretty consistent throughout.

So far there has been the main game, a three-part DLC and a mobile app. The DLC, 'Secrets of the Maw' is fun and interesting as you controll a young boy called the runaway kid as he tries to escape the Maw set in a timeline parallel to Six's campaign. The DLC gave us some answers we were looking for in the previous instalment but also left us with even more questions. The app 'Very Little Nightmares' is an entertaining playthrough, nothing special and sometimes the puzzles do not feel very fulfilling, but an enjoyable game nonetheless. There is also a comic series that goes into the lore of Little Nightmares with a good storyline and a really nice art style.

I am absolutely ecstatic about Little Nightmares Two which is coming to us in 2020 and from what we've seen so far in the trailer it looks very, very promising.



Written by Joanna McDermott



AMSTRAD'S DECISION TO ENTER THE COMPUTER MARKET VERY NEARLY DIDN'T HAPPEN. BUT THEN ROLAND PERRY ROLLED TO THE RESCUE — DAVID CROOKES TAKES UP THE STORY...

Amstrad's decision to enter the computer market very nearly didn't happen. But then Roland Perry rolled to the rescue

Alan Sugar is, more often than not, viewed as the father of the Amstrad CPC 464. But while he was keen to enter the computer market and become a fresh competitor for the likes of Commodore and Sinclair, the real brains behind what finally emerged arguably lay elsewhere.

Indeed, one of the most important figures in the CPC's

creation was Roland Perry, a technical genius who worked for a component supplier and hardware design consultancy company called Ambit, founded by William Poel.

By the time he and William became involved, the project was in a precarious position. A couple of guys who had been previously working on it — referred as 'long-haired hippies' by Lord Sugar as he's now known — had found the job to be too big and quit. Amstrad, which had made its name making low-priced audio equipment faced disaster.

At this stage, key decisions had already been made and much time and money had been invested. Bob Watkins, Amstrad's technical and manufacturing director, for instance, had commissioned a case design and the company had worked on the positioning of the computer's ports.

The cassette drive was

also ready and the monitor and keyboard were complete. It was decided that the CPC would be based on the Motorola 6502 processor. But with no motherboard forthcoming, a rethink was needed. In an act that proved a real turning point, Bob approached Ambit and Roland and William agreed to work as consultants.

'William and I came in very late in the day,' says Roland. 'The timescale was also tight. This was in August 1983 and the project was in a bad state. We had just three months to turn it around and that meant finding, and then co-ordinating sufficient suppliers to get it done in about a quarter of the time anyone would have thought possible.'

To do this, Roland spent time working through his contacts and, to save time, the 6502 was ditched in favour of the Z80 processor. This was because Richard Clayton — the co-founder of Locomotive Software, tasked with producing the CPC's



and Finstein Although we all know the CPC 464 was a cassette-based machine (adding a disc drive would have doubled the price). this £199 computer was being demonstrated with a hidden disc drive hooked up to it so that the audience wouldn't become bored waiting for the software to load. It seemed to win people over, though. Here was a machine that seemed to be able to hold its own in the 8-bit market.

including William Shakespeare

Left: Amstrad headquarters back in the day.

'It was also an all-in-one unit with no TV required which meant it was easy to set up,' says Roland. 'We also deliberately ensured distribution was available through established high street stores."

This made it more of a consumer rather than a specialist product — a highly visible computer that didn't necessarily come with a

Below: Roland in Time — Roland was the mascot for the CPC range.

operating system and BASIC had already been working with the Z80. Given the timescale, he felt it would be quicker to make a switch.

The task of creating the motherboard fell to engineer Mark Eric-Jones and, to give the computer a competitive edge. a palette of 27 colours was chosen (even though a greenscreen version of the CPC would be released too). It was given 64K so that it wouldn't look inferior on the shelves next to a Commodore 64. 'Amstrad couldn't fall behind in this emerging consumer electronics market,' Roland savs.

Lord Sugar kept a very close eye on what was going on throughout. 'He was very hands on and determined to get it built on time and on budget while delivering his vision for the product,' Roland says. But it meant a lot of hard work, with Roland's quickly-gathered team toiling from 8am to 10pm most days.

While work continued on the computer. Roland looked at commissioning software,

creating a label called Amsoft for this very purpose. Having a Z80 chip meant Spectrum games could be ported to the CPC, for better or worse. Serious titles and originality were prized too, though.

'It was important to build a strong library of titles,' Roland says. And indeed, there were about 50 games ready by the time the CPC was launched to great fanfare at Westminster School — an odd presentation that involved putting figures from the past on stage



daunting trip to a computer shop or require any more skill than a few wire connections and a single plug to get it up and running.

Sales were also strong (three million CPCs were sold in the course of its lifetime and France became a major market). 'The CPC was elegant and had a well-documented design with good sound and graphics,' says Roland by way of explanation.

The success of the 464 was enough for Amstrad to consider making a discbased version which is why the 664 came to life. Foreign distributors then demanded more than 64K so it barely lasted a few months before being replaced by the 6128. Both had three-inch rather than 3.5-inch drives.

'We had examined all the options available at the time and 3.5-inch drives were much more expensive,' says Roland. 'Unlike the three-inch, it had not yet been adopted by anyone else for a consumer product and so the three-inch was by far the most compelling. Oh, and this decision was actually made before the launch of the 464, let alone the DDI-1.'

In 1990, the CPC range was refreshed. In came the Amstrad 464 Plus and Amstrad 6128 Plus (the CPC name was dropped). The GX4000 console was also introduced. These brought with them a palette of 4,096 colours as well as hardware sprites and a hardware port. Deals were struck with major publishers, notably Ocean Software, to make games that would make use of the extra capabilities.

Some succeeded but others were lazy ports.

None of these machines sold particularly well but Roland says Amstrad was right to have tried. 'There was a perceived demand for them,' he argues. 'But you can't have every machine becoming a spectacular success because that would be suspicious.'

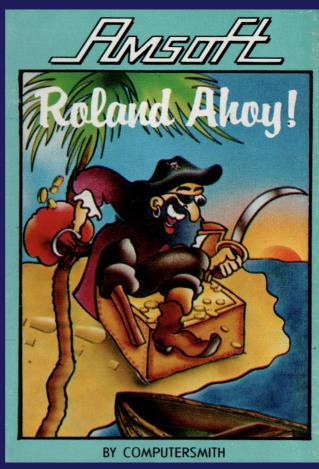
Indeed. But their relative failure — largely down to them being introduced at a time when the computing industry was firmly heading towards 16-bit machines — has

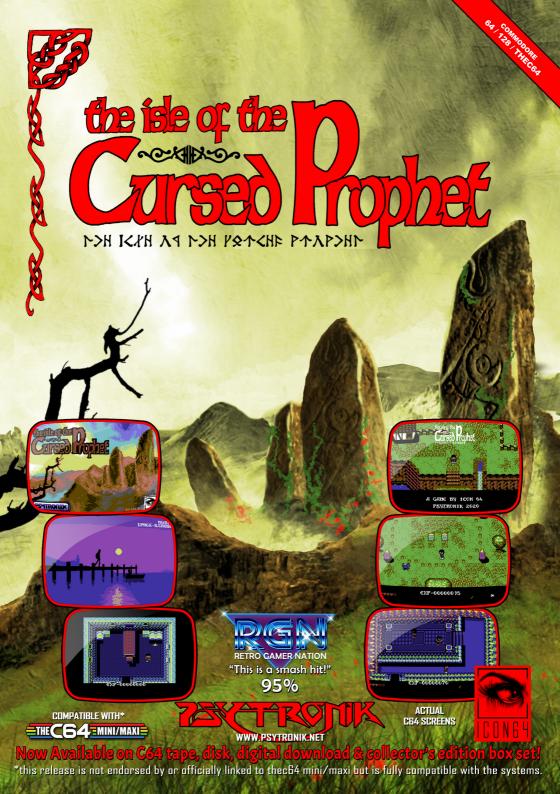
done little to dent the CPC's popularity which Roland is pleased about and the Plus machines are considered underrated gems.

But why is the CPC so fondly remembered today? 'It seems to be due to a combination of retro-80s in general and the availability of a Raspberry Pi CPC emulator," Roland muses. 'Facebook is also a very accessible platform for discussion.'

Whatever the reason, so much of it is down to him.

Below: The Amsoft label..





Some might consider the Atari Jaguar a footnote in history; the failed swan song of a once-giant corporation, long forgotten. However, delve deeper into the vibrant world of homebrew games and you would soon discover that due to Hasbro waiving all licensing requirements for Jaguar releases not only is the system not dead, but it is very much alive and kicking with an amazingly active homebrew scene.

One of the things that makes the Atari Jaguar unique is that after Atari failed, companies such as Telegames and Songbird continued to publish titles for the system, resulting in an extremely blurred line of distinction between what exactly is commercial and what is homebrew. Even titles such as 'Battlesphere' are considered by many to be commercial releases despite being released years after the system was no longer commercially viable.

The Jaguar has no keyboard or any other obvious ways to get anything uploaded to the console other than the cartridge port or the expensive Jaguar CD add on, so how did the homebrew scene evolve?

Over the years there have been several ways to get code into the system via various modifications and loaders. Probably the most commonly known was the BJL modification (Behind Jaggi Lines, a tribute to Rescue on Fractalus from Lucasfilm Games). This allowed binaries to be uploaded into the Jaguar RAM and run via a parallel cable connected to the second

joystick port.

There are also the original development kits, called 'Alpine' boards, which allow ROM images to be uploaded. In recent times we have Harmless Lion's flash-based 'Skunkboard', a nice USB flash based solution that allows single binaries to be uploaded to the cart for testing, and utilities allowing binaries to be created on encrypted CD-ROM were released so that the Jaguar CD add-on device can be used to load them. And finally, we also have the soon to be released 'Jaguar GD' device, from SainT — a true flashcart/SD solution.

But getting the binaries into the machine is only part of the problem; there is also the issue of making the actual binaries themselves. In the early years the only option was to write everything in assembler language and there was very little information about the hardware released. As such we saw simpler homebrews such as **Pong VX**.

Later on, after the original development



Written by Lawrence Staveley

manuals were put online, we were gifted with The Remover's Libraries, which allowed people to write games in assembler or C. Quite a lot of software has been written using these libraries, including the recently released UWOL: Quest for Money.

In more recent times we now have the RAPTOR API (for use with assembler and C) and RAPTOR Basic+ (known as rB+), which lowers the bar significantly, allowing people of all skill levels to write games in the BASIC language whilst still accessing much of the system's potential, with audio being provided by an external module - which is usually the U235 Sound Engine (url) or the ZeroSquare player (url). Just because it's BASIC doesn't mean it can't be great — check out the upcoming game Crumbs! from Sporadicsoft, written in rB+.

However, all this is for the 'code heads'. What you probably want to know is why you should get into Jaguar homebrew, and what is available now? Let's look at some of the best releases of the last two decades:

**DoTheSame** — from the Jagware team is a really fun and well presented puzzler game. Cute animations and great sounds make this one a winner!

**Escape 2042** is a nice platformer from Orionsoft — this game is also available on other platforms from the author's website, along with several other titles.

Next we have one of the more ambitious homebrew games, **Fallen Angels** is an homage to Rescue On Fractalus. It is well executed and a lot of fun with a great Voxel game world. It is highly recommended.

One of the earlier titles to be released and written by Sinister Developments, **Painter** is a nice take on the classic arcade games Amidar and Qix. Complete the outlines to fill in the squares.

Songbird productions finished the original Protector and made it available for purchase after the project was abandoned by its original









developer. Later, it was updated by Songbird into the more polished **Protector SE** release. Recently, a mission pack **Protector: Resurgence** was released on CD, adding even more to the game.

Rebooteroids: A modern take on the classic game Asteroids, akin to Atari's own Tempest 2000 and Defender 2000 games, in which you must blast your way through various waves of asteroids. Absolutely packed with different gameplay modes and features, this recent release has quickly become a fan favorite! (TW)

**Superfly DX**: Featuring one button gameplay at its finest, you must guide a hero through a series of passages, avoiding obstacles in different worlds in order to rescue his beloved partner. (TW)

But wait, that isn't all! Alongside these there have also been several new, licensed releases such as some of the Bitmap Brothers' games and the Oliver Twins' Dizzy series. These have been made available from publishers such as AtariAge, Songbird and Piko Interactive. Check out their stores to see what they have to offer!

This is just scratching the surface, there are many, many more games and demos available for the system. So what are you waiting for? DO THE MATH!



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Never one to dodge a challenge, regardless of the possibility of controversy or public outcry, so today I shall dance to the tune of the piper that is the Fusion Editor and list here eleven titles that I remember fondly from my days at Ocean Software.

It was going to be a top ten, but everybody loves a cliché, so Ocean's eleven it is. There will obviously be one or two in my selection where I was personally involved in the development process, but there are some, which may surprise people, which I remember with great affection for a variety of reasons.

There are also specific versions included here, chosen for their being a tad special. So, in no particular order let's get started with the first pick which is.....

#### Pang: 1994 — ZX Spectrum

An odd choice some may say, and they would not be incorrect; but Pang was a strange bird that for some reason caught my attention and tested me severely as a gamer and always came out trumps.

I was an appalling clueless bugger when it came to playing this particular release, but while single screen games rarely, with one or two exceptions both mentioned here today, held my attention for very long, I was hooked from the moment I first attempted to best this space invaders variant

I say Space Invaders because to me at least that's what it was. You were an explorer chappie with a gun that could fire a variety of doodads, depending on what power-up you collected and



while you could climb ladders to gain height you were still just a replacement for a spaceship that moved from side to side and shot vertically up-screen. Replace enemy bullets with bouncy balls and you might start to see where I'm coming from. There were a number of single screen games that had to somehow fill the back-wall with an iconic image; be it the pyramids or the Taj Mahal, but Pang had a certain jolly brightness about it that appealed to a much younger me. Perhaps it was the fact that it just looked so deceptively simple that sucked me in and then laughed repetitively at my feeble gaming skills. Whatever it was, I loved playing it, if my risible efforts could actually be labelled as such.

#### Head over Heels: 1994 — Commodore 64

For a Top Ocean list, Head Over Heels is an easy choice. I am not opting to go for the Spectrum version by Jon Ritman though. The version I have chosen is the one coded by the exceptionally talented Mr Colin Porch for the Commodore 64. Isometric games had already

reared their strangely alluring, yet devilishly devious heads somewhere around 1982 with Zaxxon, if memory serves and made their way via a selection of titles of varying allure and accomplishment onto the home computers until finally in 1987 we were introduced to the strange world and even stranger characters of Head over Heels.

Oddly, enough it was only when doing the most basic of research for this particular piece that I discovered there was an actual story behind the madness that was this wonderful little title. It

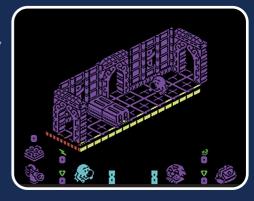


makes little or no sense and not a jot of difference in my attraction to this brilliant game. While I openly acknowledge the coding skills behind all versions of HOH, the C64 version is something of a gem, with Zzap 64 gracing it with a score of 98% and rightly labelling it 'an

all-time classic!'

It was one of those 'you can't do that!' scenarios, where people were eventually proven to be embarrassingly wrong and wound up with egg on their faces. Bravo Mr. Porch for a job magnificently done.

This being said, it was around this time and possibly with this particular release that I started to step back from isometric titles that included platforming skills of any kind, as they did bring to the table their own set of problems with regards to perspective and object placement within the environments.



While the schoolyard battles raged on over what machine had better colours and/or sound HOH came to the gamers with none of the bells and whistles C64 owners would normally have expected, but it had gameplay in abundance which more than satisfied anyone worth their salt.

I could never stop myself from heading into Ocean's testing rooms to try my meagre skills and see if I could get further than my previous, albeit pathetic attempts. I rarely did, but would happily sit and watch others, infinitely more talented than myself; I'm talking about you here Mr. Porch and Mr Lee Cowley as they sailed through room after room in this wacky but wonderful addition to any gamer's collection.

It is not wrong to say that Head Over Heels has stood the test of time and looks just as good today as it ever did.

#### The Addams Family: 1994 — SNES

It was inevitable that this would be in my selection as I have gone on record whenever questioned, as saying that The Addams Family was possibly my happiest time on any project during my tenure at Ocean.

The coding and design were perfect and my brief to draw sprites that were 'spooky' gave me carte blanche to do pretty much anything that came into my mind. Not all my sprites wound up in the game but certainly, a large percentage found themselves in one level or another.

The whole game was a joy from day one, I beavered away all day while the main team

worked like Trojans on the other side of the partition from me with new level design and tweaks and tricks being added almost daily. Then I would take work home and burn the midnight oil on even more sprite designs. Some I have on file to this very day.

I have a very special place in my affections for the SNES, as it always felt like 'the perfect games machine' to me. I have played games on many computers and/or consoles but this was the first time the style and substance truly came together. Having such a quality title on the SNES was simply icing on the cake and although I did have a small finger in the pie that was the sequel, it didn't have the same resonance for me as the original.

I still think it holds up wonderfully to this day and I always smile to myself if I see it at a show or retro event thinking, 'ah but will you find the hidden door, or the secret wall?'



#### New Zealand Story: 1994 - Commodore Amiga

I've said many times in podcasts and interviews that being a great soft lump, I'm a soft touch for games with cute characters and New Zealand Story is chock full of them. From the

tiny Kiwi protagonist in his huge sports shoes to the vast array of bizarre teddy bears, cats, hermit crabs and more. What's not to love?

It's a torturously difficult little rascal to play, but one I always loved to hammer away at to try to get further with each attempt or to discover hidden bonus items that seemingly lay almost everywhere. It was, for me anyway everything I wanted in a platformer, apart from the diagonal flying sections, which seemed designed to emphasise my ham-fisted abilities as a gamer. There just seemed to be something appearing or opening or happening



everywhere on screen and at times this was somewhat distracting but I just kept going back for more. I was determined to get Phee Phee back from the dastardly leopard seal and restore the land of the kiwis to peace and harmony.

Although I never managed to achieve that one final task, I got hellishly close and enjoyed every damn minute. I just hope Phee Phee didn't suffer too much due to my failings.

#### Worms: 1994 — Commodore Amiga

While not actually working at Ocean, I had decamped to Team 17 at this juncture, this was still an Ocean product and one I have a lot of time for, but only when we're talking about the

original.

I had played a freeware title called Tanx, I think, that came with some PC mag at the time so the gameplay was not totally alien, although I did wonder slightly at the level of excitement everyone was throwing about when Worms was mentioned. Nevertheless, without being characteristically overly cynical, once I got to grips with Worms I was hooked and game after game was played when we should have been doing other things. Battles went



on for days as we snuck into the testing rooms from our own projects and slugged (no pun intended) it out across the wonderfully destructible pixelated worlds of worms. Of course the schoolboy humour appealed with the tiny swear-words echoing as we blasted each other to smithereens. But who could resist sheep bombs, banana bombs and more? It was pixelated pandemonium and I loved every single square. I contributed only slightly from a graphical point, but I am more than proud to have contributed to something that I consider to be one of the stalwarts of the games pantheon.

My kids and I spent many a happy hour blowing each other to bits.

#### Platoon: 1994 - ZX Spectrum

We arrive at another potentially obvious choice, but this one actually surprised me by turning out pretty much as I imagined and being received far better than I dreamt.

It's mostly down to the quality of the teams responsible for the development of each version as I was simply behind the design. The poor bugger sat in the dark in a private viewing room in London, who was then expected to translate some of the most graphic war-borne



violence into a palatable game for children far too young to see the film that 'inspired' me. I remember walking out into the afternoon sunlight wondering what the hell I had just watched and baffled as to how I was supposed to bring that to the 8-bit machines. But over time things worked out, as they usually do and with the underground development teams chosen, the pieces started falling into place. What I was working on at the time is long forgotten as I bounced backwards and forwards between each team, overseeing their progress, which if memory serves went without any problems whatsoever. I would never be so bold as to suggest we pushed any boundaries or broke new ground but I do believe that Platoon delivered an experience to gamers unlike any they had seen before, especially with regards to licensed product. It did get a Crash Smash for the Spectrum version, which is possibly the only time I can lay claim to being associated with that particular accolade.

#### Combat School: 1994 — Commodore 64

I was never a great fan of the arcade machine when it arrived in Arcade Alley in the bowels of the Ocean building; but as this was to be my next project, I persevered and slogged away at the various training disciplines in an attempt to see what it was I was supposed to translate onto the C64 and at some point I had a lightbulb moment. By this I mean I felt that this was the project where I could get some hi-res overlays involved to make the sprites look less like a bunch of



shoeboxes in a wind tunnel and more like a human being. I'd fallen for the appeal of overlays ever since I saw Heartland and was desperate to give them a whirl. I pitched the idea to my coder who saw no problem and in my own humble opinion, they worked reasonably well. They're not present in every section, for reasons that my crumbling muffin of a brain cannot recall, but the game works well on hindsight.

We added some parts of our own unless I am completely befuddled and the end 'villain' was an in-house joke, the kind you had to be there at the time to truly understand and/ or appreciate. Unless I'm completely mistaken, I don't think anyone was ever capable of completing the arcade machine so we had to 'imagine' an ending of our own. Who knows? It was a long time ago and while I can't recall every detail of the whys and wherefores, I do know I enjoyed being part of what turned out to be a pretty decent project that a reasonable number of people seem to remember fondly.

#### Arkanoid: 1994 — ATARI ST

This was one of those games being developed by other, more talented people, while I slogged away on whatever it was I was involved with at the time. However, it had a strange allure that kept me wandering away from my duties into Arcade Alley to have a sly smoke, which was just my excuse to fire up the Arkanoid machine and test my reactions.

I do remember actually beating this game at least once, which surprised me more than anyone else and can only have been a fluke because it wasn't



something that was ever repeated. This achievement and the subsequent lack of my ability to duplicate it ever again didn't stop me from hammering away at this machine like someone possessed. What on earth could be so hard about a bat and ball game you think? Well you've obviously never met the devil incarnate that goes by the name of Arkanoid. What a belter of a game. I was rubbish at Pong, so why the hell did I ever expect to be any good at something with multiple projectiles, falling power-ups, and bright distracting colours? None of this mattered because it was, is and always shall be one of those one-more-go games that makes you grit your teeth thinking 'You'll not get the better of me you stupid machine! Invariably, you're proven embarrassingly wrong for the umpteenth time, but for some strange reason there's still a frisson of satisfaction at something you did, or some combination of ball and block collision that was oddly satisfying.

FUSION \_\_\_\_\_ 95

#### Rainbow Islands: 1994 — Commodore Amiga

Another great character driven game with Bob and Bob bouncing frenetically upwards on rainbows, and why not?

One of those games where there's just an abundance of things to look at, exploding rainbows, characters bouncing hither and yon, bees and honeycombs everywhere, gems and potions tantalisingly just where you don't want them to be. It was madness, but it worked and when you knew what you were doing, or pretended to in my case, it was sheer joy. Add a smashingly



addictive theme tune into the mix and the time just flew by. You'd be hard pushed to say which version was the best out of the conversions as they pretty much all received a more than smashing reception from the press. For me it would have to be the Amiga version, only because I was developing on an Amiga at the time so that was my go-to machine for games, while in work I am not embarrassed to say. Yes, it was pretty much a case of wash, rinse repeat, with little if any variation on what was required to make any great progress through the game, but what title wasn't in those days? Reach the top, open a chest, and gasp in awe at the cascading gems. All traditional gaming fodder but just beautifully done. It was just fun to play and the simple action of firing out rainbows either in singular or multiple form and then bouncing higher and higher became second nature. It was almost therapeutic. Bob and Bob were great characters who have earned their seats in the hall of gaming heroes!

#### Gryzor: 1994 — AMSTRAD CPC

The version I'm choosing here is the wonderfully pixelled and fabulously coded Amstrad version.

I always have a lot of time for the Amstrad, it's like the poor relation made to sit in the corner at family gatherings. However, if you took the time to sit and make a connection you then find out what you've been missing.

Mr Mark K. Jones (senior) was a dab hand with the old brightly coloured, chunky pixels



and nowhere more than here in my humble opinion. I just love the whole look of it; the sprites are bold and really nicely animated, especially in the interior corridor sections, with the flip-backwards-die-sequence. John 'Elmer' Brandwood coded this like a champ and it shows; it's a quality conversion through and through and one I remember keeping an eye on all through development, as I am always prepared to admit to being in awe of someone pushing pixels that make me green with envy. It was one of those titles developed in my formative years in the Ocean cellars and I remember watching as it came together and being quite jealous of not being part of any of the teams involved in the conversion. It is almost certainly the best of all the 8-bit conversions, regardless of lacking certain levels and/or bosses, but it gave Amstrad owners a title they could hold up and shake vehemently in the faces of their schoolyard detractors with pride. It showed what the CPC was capable of!

#### Robocop: 1994 — ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64

This is a funny old choice, only from my point of view because it's a 'what if?' kind of a game. What I mean by that is that I was originally the graphics guy on the C64 version and

had actually started work on animations when I decided to jump ship for an infinitely smaller and considerably riskier team who would allow me to work on a 16-bit product.

I was getting somewhat jaded with the endless conversions and movie tie-ins that invariably called upon what some called 'the Ocean multi-level' solution to design. I felt we were repeating the same old gameplay mechanics time and again, with factory/ warehouse levels filled with packing crates plus a sliding puzzle

game or something else from the never-capacious Ocean grab bag of ideas and gaming innovations.

So off I went and left Robocop behind me. The movie was, for its time, enjoyable in a trashy kind of way but hasn't stood the test of time. The same cannot be said for the game.

I see the game at conventions and events and people seem to love playing it. I watch them and think, 'What would this have been had I still been involved?' Would it have been any different simply because of a pixel pusher?

I think the answer is decidedly 'yes!' and not for the better.

While my choice to wander into 16-bit development may not have been the wisest of moves, with hindsight, Robocop certainly benefitted from the addition of Mr Stephen Thomson who brought his own special, stunning kind of graphical magic to what is, to be fair a rather staid side scrolling shooter, albeit a hellishly difficult one if truth be told.

His static graphics are stunning, and aided admirably by the always-talented Dawn Drake they gave the gamers something to be proud to own, a game that sold more than a million copies and helped Ocean to weather harsh times in the industry.

It is a game of its time, a game that defines an era if I may be so bold. Robocop encapsulates Ocean, if you will. Striding forward, a man-made colossus, letting none stand to bar the way.

It was unfairly judged I feel, perhaps it is too hard, too unforgiving. But I have completed it and I have already outlined how lacking I am in gaming skills.



It's a challenge, tough as nails and sometimes brutal. Nevertheless, that's Robocop in a nutshell and I for one am glad I walked away. It was a better game for me leaving and for that reason it holds a special resonance; it was a turning point, when my life and my career changed markedly, not always for the better, but it led to a great span of development experience that I would never have encountered had I stayed.

## FUSION

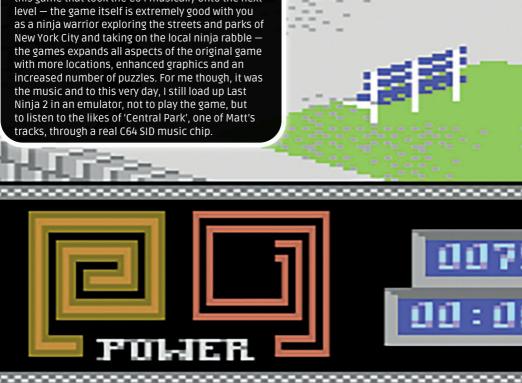
: Last Ninja 2 Game

1988

System: Commodore 64

Beep and bops were common sounds effects on the early home computer games that complimented the action on screen — these were adequate but did not entirely 'add' to the atmosphere and draw the player in. The arrival of composers such as Rob Hubbard and David Whittaker saw the introduction of musical scores into games and improved sound effects — there were many games bought, often poor ones, due to particular musicians being on the games' credits. By 1988 and the arrival of The Last Ninia 2, the C64 gamer expected to be treated aurally, as well as visually when playing a game.

Matt Gray created a number of SID anthems for this game that took the C64 musically onto the next level — the game itself is extremely good with you as a ninja warrior exploring the streets and parks of New York City and taking on the local ninja rabble the games expands all aspects of the original game with more locations, enhanced graphics and an increased number of puzzles. For me though, it was the music and to this very day. I still load up Last Ninja 2 in an emulator, not to play the game, but to listen to the likes of 'Central Park', one of Matt's tracks, through a real C64 SID music chip.





# 侘寂 (wabi-sabi)

(n.) A way of living that focuses on finding beauty within the imperfections of life and accepting peacefully the natural cycle of growth and decay.



Most vintage toy collectors seem to spend their time trying to collect the most mint, perfect condition version of a toy possible. A toy that has never been played with, that is as perfect as it can possibly be. And best of all one that has never been removed from it's box.

But that is not how I collect. For me a played with well loved toy has a charm of its own. If the paint is worn, if the hands have been chewed, or bits are missing, it's still a toy that I would have in my collection.

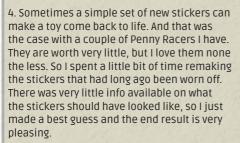
Which is why I describe myself as a Wabi-Sabi toy collector.

Wabi-Sabi is a Japanese term and world view centred on the acceptance of imperfection. There is no direct western translation for Wabi-Sabi, but essentially it is the art of finding beauty in the imperfect and incomplete. Basically, things don't have to be perfect to be appreciated.

In Japan there is a special art form called Kintsugi where they take broken pottery and repair it with lacquer dusted or mixed with powdered gold, silver, or platinum. Turning the repaired item into a work of art with the cracks now visible as gold lines across the surface of the pottery. As a philosophy, it treats the breakage and repair as part of the history of an object, rather than something to disguise. The

#### Toy Polloi's Top 5 Wabi Sabi toys

5. I was given a bag of broken and capeless Star Wars Emperors Royal Guards by a subscriber. An afternoons fun was had reattaching the heads and making new capes from felt for them all. Easy to spot they are not original, but they still look amazing all lined up.



3.Many of my action figures have been very well played with and have often had arms, heads or legs broken off. I fix all of these the same way using Lego axle pins to create a new movable joint. The figures end up looking as good as new, but with the added advantage that you can now swap body parts with other figures.

2. Star Wars Y-wing's are always missing the rear struts that make up the engines of the ship. Without them they look a bit rubbish. The struts are super hard to find, so I ended up making some of my own using rods from another toy line, K'Nex. With a bit of modification they look the part, and actually seem much stronger than the original.

1. By far the worst figure I have ever tried to save was a 1970s Action Man explorer. At some point in his long life this old Action Man had been completely painted red in Humbrol Enamel paints. The figure was a mess and one that I think most people would have just thrown away as it looked too far gone. But after many hours work, and a lot of fun he ended up looking great, with just the odd tinge of red left in his cheeks. He is by far my favourite Action Man figure now as I know how much work went into saving him.













#### 金継ぎ (kintsugi)

(n.) (v.phr) "to repair with gold"

The art of repairing pottery with lacquer and gold or silver powder, understanding that the piece is more beautiful for having been broken.

You may have not realised it, but the latest Star Was film — Rise of Skywalker, features a rather beautiful example of Kintsugi, albeit with a Star Wars twist. Early on in the film Kylo Rens smashed mask is repaired by Albrekh, a Symeong Sith alchemist, and metalsmith. The reconstructed mask is left covered with red lines following the cracks and repairs, exactly how the gold and lacquer is used to fix ceramics. The results give the mask a unique menacing look, which fits well with Rens troubled mental state in the film.



that no one has ever played with or touched seems such a waste.

So buying a broken toy or very play worn figure is what I do. If it needs some repairs I will take on the challenge and get it working again. Sometimes the fixes will be hidden and you won't be able tell anything had happened to it, other times the fix will require adding something or changing it a bit. Maybe using a piece of Lego, or creating a cape from some felt. These fixes add a new story to the toy's life and mean that it can be displayed and played with again. And even if it can't be fixed, I will still

end results give the pottery a new beauty that many people appreciate and collect.

And that is how I treat my toy collection. If you have watched any of my videos you will have noticed that the toys I collect generally start out as the broken remains or left overs that most people wouldn't take a second look at. If I find an action figure at the bottom of a box and it's covered in dirt and filth, I know that with a bit of work and cleaning I can make look nicer.

I originally started collecting like this



display the toy in it's broken state as they look great.

When you collect like this you soon learn to love that these toys have had a previous life and have been played with and enjoyed by someone. Even though they may look a bit rough, or are missing pieces, they can still be appreciated.

So just remember, not everything you own needs to be perfect. Broken toys are just as much fun, if not more fun to collect.

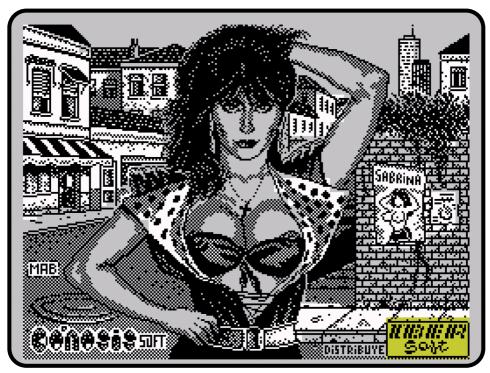
as I couldn't afford to buy the better end of the market, or just didn't feel I could justify spending a lot of money on a toy. If I spent £100 on a nice mint toy would I get any enjoyment out of it? Probably not. It would just get put in my display. But if I spent £1 on a broken toy that I then cleaned and repaired, I get an endless amount of joy from it, and the knowledge that it had been saved. So this is now my preferred way of collecting. Having a toy mint in it's box



TERRIBLE OLD GAMES
YOU'VE PROBABLY
NEVER HEARD OF

SABRINA

STUART ASHEN



FOLLOWING ON FROM HIS BOOK TERRIBLE OLD GAMES YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF, STUART ASHEN EXPLORES ONE MORE FOR THE ROAD

Cast your mind back to the irritatingly catchy pop tunes of 1987 and you'll probably think of Rick Astley promising that he was never gonna give you up. But that wasn't the only earworm assaulting the charts. Italian singer Sabrina Salerno reached number 3 with Boys (Summertime Love), helped in no small part by an infamous poolside video that had teenage

boys wearing out the pause button on Dad's VCR.

Sabrina had more lasting success in mainland Europe which led to this bizarre Spanish game a couple of years later. It came packaged with an audio cassette of Sabrina's songs, so you could play that at maximum volume to hide your sobbing at having paid 1200 Pesetas for this load of old cobblers.

Things start well when you load the game up, with a decently drawn title screen and even a bit of sampled speech. Sabrina squawks 'Genesis Soft presenta Sabrina!' before an excellently arranged version of Boys (Summertime Love) plays. It's hard to imagine the 48K Spectrum's beeper doing a

better job of the song. Then you notice that Sabrina is revealing a bit more of herself than you'd expect, but apparently that wasn't enough as there's an entirely topless poster of her in the background. The tone has now been set, and it's a tone so low it could start earthquakes.

Our disturbingly pneumatic heroine prepares to destroy a woman's shins at the airport.

The plot goes that Sabrina has landed in a city and needs to make her way from the airport to the television station for a concert. Due to an unexplained aversion to taxis she has to travel on foot, which is a problem as the city's inhabitants are mostly violent maniacs that want her dead. You'd think she'd take the hint



**Above:** The rather large lady who likes to wave her fist at poor Sabrina.

and go somewhere else.

The included instructions give no clue whatsoever how to play the game, which leads to a frustrating dose of trial and error due to some of the game's odder mechanics. At its core it's a very basic flick-screen beat 'em up — Sabrina has to walk from the left of the screen to the right, dispatching the various townspeople before they drain her health and she runs out of lives.

You quickly realise there's a kind of rock-paper-scissors thing going on with the enemies. Sabrina has three attacks, each of which is only effective against a specific character. And they're pretty far from the attacks you normally see in a game. She can kick people in the shins, slap them around the face or make her breasts suddenly swell and smack them. I can't imagine this moveset being in the next God of War.

The enemy types consist of a tall lady who wags her

finger, an overweight lady who shakes her fist, and a man with a knife. Presumably the first two are supposed to represent townspeople who disapprove of Sabrina, but I'm not sure how the stabbing murderer fits into that. You also have to avoid flowerpots dropped from above and some kind of flying tomato, which is inescapable as there's no ducking or crouching. Some screens have bombs in them which need to be kicked away before they

explode. And occasionally a little man runs across the screen who can't be hit and doesn't do any damage — in fact he seems to replenish Sabrina's energy. He runs with arms outstretched as if fleeing from something terrifying, or possibly as if he's trying to grope Sabrina. Either way I don't want to think about it.

Last on the list of dangers is the dreaded end of level boss, who appears after 19 screens have been suffered through, Said boss is a scantily clad woman who stands in one place constantly kicking. punching and slapping the air in front of her. You have to manoeuvre Sabrina into this bizarre maelstrom of violence and get enough hits in to make it to the next level before all your energy and lives run out, which is very unlikely unless you've played almost perfectly to this point.

The second level is basically the same as the first

Below: Here come's the runner — arms wide open ready for a grope...I mean hug.



with changed graphics. The enemies are now a priest, an old lady and a flail-swinging female punk. The running man is now an old man with a walking stick, the bombs are dynamite and the end of level boss is exactly the same as level one Wonderful Completion of this level presents you with a message saying you got to the end and a numerical code, which you can enter into a separate program on the tape to see a primitive end scene showing Sabrina performing on stage while the music from the title screen plays and, predictably, her top keeps falling down. Or at least that's what happens in the versions of the game for other computers — I couldn't find a Spectrum image that included the ending part. One day I will track down an affordable original cassette and see if it's actually on there.

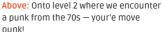
So what's so bad about this game then? Other than the fact it's obsessed with a pop

Below: Sabrina enters the locker room — this never happened in my school!



singer's breasts it sounds fairly run-of-the-mill so far. Well, pull up a chair friends, as this may take a while.

The graphics are arguably the best aspect, and they range from adequate to Hideous. The backgrounds are at least colourful if never particularly well drawn, but the characters themselves are odd cartoony silhouettes. Sabrina's walk cycle is surprisingly smooth but all the other characters shuffle along



as if sliding around in socks on a newly polished floor. In-game sound is minimal and limited entirely to Sabrina's eerie popping footsteps, some rumbling white noise when you lose a life, and a horrible squeal if a bomb goes off.

And now we come to the real horror show: the gameplay itself. The good news is that the controls are responsive. That is the end of the good news.

The game runs at an extreme pace, with Sabrina rattling across the screen so fast it's no wonder she doesn't bother with taxis. You need very precise timing to hit the enemies which would be difficult enough at such velocity, but you can never get a proper feel for it as the game speed is constantly changing. Every attacker on the screen causes noticeable slowdown, and if you've got all three types running at you it gets very sluggish. Then you hit a couple, they fly off screen and bam! You're back to moving so fast





Above: Of all the other systems this could have appeared on, the MSX won the award.

it would startle a rabbit on a sugar high. And sometimes enemies appear on top of you as you reach the edge of the screen, or two appear on top of each other and it's impossible to hit both at the same time. There's nothing like an unavoidable obstacle to create needless frustration.

The real rub here is that if you miss a single enemy you're liable to have almost an entire energy bar evaporate, so your stock of three lives can be gone in seconds. It's quite feasible for a game to be over within 30 seconds of starting. I had to use an infinite health cheat to get near the end of the first level!

Then its onto level 2 — or as I call it, 'Another 19 screens of this dross.' The bombs are the rancid cherry on the rotten cake. They need to be kicked off screen before they explode, but their timer is based on

how close they are to the left-hand side of the screen where Sabrina enters. If they're towards the right then you've got time take care of them. But if they're near the left you have literally one second to spot them, move Sabrina over to the exact position needed and kick them away. It's pretty much impossible if you don't know one is coming up. And many failures were suffered working out that the positioning is nonsense — you need to stand Sabrina just after the bomb and kick into thin air to get rid of it.

And this is a big deal because if a bomb goes off it's instantly game over! It doesn't matter how much energy you have left or how many lives remain, you're dumped straight back to the title screen. (the most effective strategy when spotting a bomb is to walk back into the previous screen then re-enter, which resets the timer now that you know where the bomb

is. The best strategy is, of course, not to play the game at all.)

Sabrina is a wretched, miserable chore of a game. A feeble, childish cash-in of a pop singer's chest that's shameful both for the concept and the execution. Its insane difficulty destroys any potential enjoyment and makes it more of a frustration delivery system than a game. To think that the superb beat 'em up Target: Renegade came out a year before this and cost

325 Pesetas less!

Developers Genesis Soft and publishers Iber Software released several disappointing games, apparently not all them their own. They're infamous on the MSX scene for essentially being commercial software pirates, hacking existing games to change the graphics slightly before releasing them as their own. Apparently they didn't believe in playability or ethics

Fortunately the real life Sabrina Salerno was undamaged by this computerised awfulness and went on to have considerable success both in music and as a TV presenter. This success may be partially down to not actually fighting her way through towns full of psychotic murderers to reach TV studios.

For many more awful gaming monstrosities, check out Stuart 's books Terrible Old Games You've Probably Never Heard Of and its sequel Attack Of The Flickering Skeletons.

## WARLOCK KADASH







NEIL THOMAS AKA MR. RETRO MAN CAVE, TAKES HIS ATARI CAR FOR A SPIN

Iconic 80s arcade driving games are not in short supply, Pole Position, Chase H.Q or Outrun immediately spring to mind. They offered driving escapism for our coin with exotic cars and outlandish scenarios far removed from daily life, so what

right did Atari's Hard Drivin', a simulation, have to be in our beloved arcades when it arrived in 1989?

This game, in any of its 15 cabinet guises, some of which set the arcades back \$10,000 a pop, immediately stood out as a technical marvel when compared to earlier racers which used scaled sprites to give their impression of a

3rd dimension, Hard Drivin' instead paired an 8mhz 68010 CPU with two TMS34010 chips programmable graphics chips that we now recognise as GPU's, although the term did not vet exist. The result, a true 3D, polygon filled racetrack with a silky smooth frame rate and the promise of a hyper realistic driving experience. It wasn't quite the first, the polygons of Namco's Winning Run hit Japan in 1988 but that wouldn't reach western shores until the following year, and that game gave us the thrills and spills of F1 racing.

Hard Drivin' in comparison had a more pedestrian pace despite what the speedo might have read. My first experience of the game was met with some confusion. Yet to learn how to drive, what was this clutch pedal I was expected to use? Why does the car keep

Below: The overwhelming sense of speed is lost on the player!





stalling? Is that thing a cow? And most notably, where is the overwhelming sense of speed? It's easy to take the players breath away with a screen full of scaling sprites but this polygon world was sparse. speed was a number on the dashboard. Perseverance would be rewarded, however. To guide your red sports car around the track successfully was akin to gently touching down an aircraft in a flight sim. Monitoring your speed, checking the signposts to ensure you approached a bend or an obstacle in the correct gear and nursing the

car around the track without straying over the centre lines. It was arcade racing for grown-ups, even if the loop-the-loops tried to convince you otherwise.

It won over enough players with a little over 3,000 cabinets in circulation to render the license attractive for home conversion. These should be applauded for their ambition if not their results. Attempting to recreate this game on an 8-bit micro was surely an impossible task and that was reflected in reviews such as Zzap!64's 20% rating for the C64 release. Even Atari's own

16-bit machines were no match for the original hardware.

Hard Drivin'
was far from
perfect, but its
legacy can be
found in later
games such
as 4D Sports

**Above:** The woeful Commodore 64 version of Hard Drivin'.

Driving (aka Stunts) which gave

a superior home experience when our PC hardware caught up with the original cabinet. The action replay feature would become a staple of any good driving simulation, and it gave arcades confidence that polygons could bring them pounds. Adrenalin infused games such as Virtua Racing. Ridge Racer, Sega Rally and Daytona USA would take the technology forward, and a decade later Ferrari F355 Challenge would prove that a parking space remained in the arcades for the more discerning racing fan who had perhaps, like me, picked up their virtual driving license with Atari's Hard Drivin'.



https://youtube.com/ retromancave @theRetroManCave



YOUTUBE SENSATION OCTAV1US GETS ALL GRISTLEY

The titular character Chubby Gristle, who also appeared on the Atari ST, Amiga computers and Amstrad CPC, perhaps has his most impressive outing on the humble ZX Spectrum; because despite the bizarre premise of his game and the few available colours, the gross character

has his prettiest visage here. He's a surprisingly detailed fat lad with a big nose, both hands tucked behind his back and his belly stretching past the aforementioned hooter.

He looks sort of adorable. Which is the opposite of what can be gleaned from the game's cover art.

Chubby Gristle first appeared on home computers in 1988, developed by Teque Software Development Ltd. The young company had a few titles under its belt by this point, but Chubby Gristle would showcase an original character of theirs, allegedly based on a real 'Sheffield character', which is perhaps the most remembered by gamers of the time. Purely because Gristle is kind of awful.

Gristle is a car parking attendant. And much like real

car parking attendants, he has an axe to grind with anyone choosing to use his car park. The game's cover depicts an enormous, wobbling, and pasty man whose belly is bursting out of his jacket, and protectively posed between a people carrier and an orange traffic cone. Just waiting for his next victim. The title of the game, hovering above him, is spelt out in sausages, bacon, and a few errant fried eggs.

Taking on his role, it is your job to bundle about a series of parking-themed screens, eating as much as you can and avoiding anything that can kill you. Which, in the world of Chubby Gristle, is quite literally anything. Rats, old ladies, crocodiles, murderous cupcakes; they are all in there. All stopping Chubby Gristle from doing his job. Which is

**Below:** The aim of the game, eat as much as you can it seems (Amiga).



Permet 'olders only









HISCORE:

2387







- what, exactly?

You would be forgiven for thinking that maybe, just maybe, a game about a parking warden might involve whacking out parking tickets to people who were just popping into the newsagents to pick up their ailing wife's medicine, or drivers who have wandered onto the yellow lines while having a heart attack at the wheel. Chubby Gristle has so little to do with the joys of being an utter pillock that it is upsetting.

With his bulbous nose

wobbling as the surprisingly sprightly Gristle jumps about, all he is doing is wandering about a bunch of screens and picking up whatever food items are flashing. The more he eats, the higher the needle on the scale you will see in the bottom right of the screen.

Get that needle right to the top and be treated with the delightful scene of Chubby going home with his voluptuous wife and pumping out a bunch of large children like a scene straight from a

Left: The Commodore 64 version on top, the Amstrad CPC version of Chubby below.

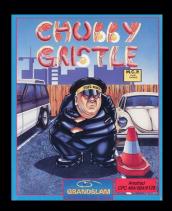
clown car. This is a game about a car park attendant, right?

This had the potential to be a great game premise, but it falls so short of its promises that even the novelty of having a lead character that is amusingly repulsive means nothing. And he is no more fun on other platforms. The Amiga version, in particular, looks bloody awful losing the charm of the Spectrum's limited colour graphics and the smooth controls.

Well, the game was not especially well received by critics across all platforms, bemoaning the dated humour and by now very stale Monty Mole/Manic Miner gameplay style.

Ultimately, this character is doomed to be remembered only by those who hung out with him in the 80s. Perhaps there is no space in the popular history of retro gaming for a lardy, grumpy traffic attendant?

So, raise a bacon butty for this lad next time you get a parking ticket. Bless him, he tried his best.





DJ SLOPES TELLS THE STORY OF BASKET BALL CLASSICS — A GAME DEVELOPED BY TWO GUYS PASSIONATE ABOUT TECMO SUPER BOWL

Video games have come a long long way. You only need to look at whatever game you grew up with compared to what's available now to see that. Yet, for some reason, we still hold on to the classics regardless of the aging process!

And why do we do this, is it purely nostalgia? Well, yes, more often than not... this is most definitely the case. I can think of plenty of games that I enjoyed growing up. However, when I try them today 30 years later, I need to 're-educate' myself on how

to get around the handicaps that newer games have long overcome.

But, what about the games that don't age? What about those games that didn't need to push the limits of whatever system they were on. The games that were simply just solid experiences that worked with what they had and are still just as enjoyable today as they have always been.

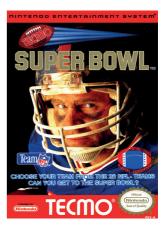
I am sure that when you read this you are already thinking of that perfect title that did everything it needed to and to this very day it still provides an experience that no other game old or new could possibly beat.

This is the story of two guys who shared this passion for a single 8-bit title from 1991 on the NES and continued to do so for the next 30+ years; that game was Tecmo Super Bowl.

Tecmo Super Bowl is an American Football game by Tecmo (obviously) released originally in 1987 worldwide under the name Tecmo Bowl. The original arcade unit was a lot wider than standard cabinets for the time, making use of two screens which allowed the player to see a lot more of the top downplaying field.

You pick a fictional team, be it the Wildcats or

**Below:** The Tecmo Bowl sequel — Super Bowl on the NES box cover.





Bulldogs, and enjoy a very well respected American football game, if that's your thing. The sprites are nice and fat, the large screen area lets you plan out your move set better than most games in the same genre. And besides the game being a tad too slow for my liking, it's still a fun experience and is obviously best enjoyed whilst drinking Kool-Aid, probably in a frat house. with one of those unwashed oversized football jerseys on, I dunno!

Regardless, none of this really matters, this is just the history of the franchise. If you have played Tecmo Bowl before it's unlikely that this would have been the version you played. Because it was when the game made its way onto the NES in 1989 and more importantly its sequel Tecmo Below: Super Bowl on



SUPER Bowl in 1991 when the series really did find it's hardcore audience, not here in the UK of course as it was never released physically but instead in the States.

Yep, whilst we were

it... he met Dave and instantly the two became joined at the controller cord due to their loving passion for pixelated football scrums — that's an American Football thing, right?

Anyway, as time moved on over the next three years and no doubt 1000's of competitive matches on their favourite game later, the duo decided to create a game that was inspired by Tecmo Super Bowl.

The only problem was, how do you beat the perfect American football title?

The answer was to use

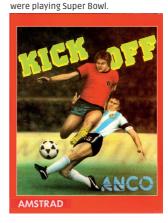


playing footy titles such as Kick-Off and eventually the almighty Sensible Soccer, the Yanks were more than a little obsessed with Tecmo Super Bowl. So much so that it ended up finding its way onto the NES Mini for us too for some weird reason.

Anyway, Josh Marchant and Dave Pilkington (image above) were two young lads that did live in America! Both had an NES (no surprise there), they didn't know of each other's existence but they both shared a keen interest in Tecmo Super Bowl.

Fast forward from the early 90s to 2013 and Josh (who was now a big boy nerd) was holding his 3rd annual Tecmo Super Bowl championship which was when, you guessed it as inspiration and create the perfect basketball game instead, a sport that the two were much bigger fans of. And that game was.

Below: We in the UK were playing Kick Off when the Yanks







Basketball Classics.

Basketball Classics is a 5 on 5 Basketball game that didn't take inspiration from the basketball games we grew up with (such as NBA JAM) but instead from arguably the most popular American Football game released during the 8-bit era instead.

This new approach gives the game not only a different feel but more importantly a different look. The sprites of each character in Tecmo Super Bowl are 16 pixels tall, and they

recreated that in this game by creating the characters to be between 16 and 18 pixels depending on the position they play in.

Again, just

like TSB, the playfield is more top-down than what you may be familiar with. Helping create a basketball game that feels a lot more tactile than others that came before it. It's still fast and arcadey as it should be but by minimizing the size of the player and spacing out the playfield you

**Left**: A much more top-town approach to basketball.

are given the ability to work on formations. Something that's essential in American footy titles but often overlooked in early basketball games.

Each character has different stats that change up the way you play and just like the original Tecmo Bowl which was the first ever American football game to feature real players' names. This game, kind of does as well. Sure they are not the real names, but any fan of basketball can easily work out who is who.

To add a little flair in an otherwise very basic looking pixelated game, short animations play when scoring three points, dunks, and other exciting shots just like they did in the NES title all those years ago.

This feature was pushed even further when the duo created a crude video message with Japanese subtitles and sent it with a demo of their new in-development game to their heroes... the creators of Tecmo Super Bowl Shinichiro Tomie and Akihiko Shimoji.

Below: You were blocked — in-game animation.



Right: Three points in the bag!

To their surprise, the retired Shimoji-san actually responded praising the American Football inspired Basketball game and gave some words of advice by explaining what he was aiming to achieve when working on Tecmo Bowl all those years ago

As Akihiko Shimoji stated, 'We focused on the sensation of the game. Everything followed a rhythm and we had to be willing to cut anything that disrupted that rhythm'

This rhythm was implemented into the final release of the title, primarily in the dunking system found within those artistic cutscenes found in the game and it continued to help with its overall arcadev aesthetic. Sometimes if you are going in for a dunk you can use the d-pad to recreate different types of dunks and of course if your blocking you need to try your best to match these movements before the player reaches the net, in a sort of quick time mini game.

The end result is great, fun, similar to what you have played in the past, but different enough to make it





stand out as an indie sports title that doesn't seem to be getting much attention. The reviews are 'very positive' over on Steam and the duo seem to be constantly adding new

Above : The creators of Tecmo Super Bowl Shinichiro Tomie and Akihiko Shimoji

move sets among other things based on player feedback.

I am sure we can all agree that a classic arcade basketball game with friends is hard to beat. Classic football games I can take or leave, but a good 1 on 1 basketball game is always great fun and thankfully the team at NAMO GAMO games have created something that quite literally couldn't have been made without the hardcore passion of that video game they both admired from such an early age.







## FUSION

Game : Shinkansen Controller

Year : 2007

System: Nintendo Wi

In my head I had a witty and clever introduction that was to be written for this 'Fusion Love' but to be honest I think I can take all of that clever wordplay and condense it into one sentence. Custom game controllers for Western games are, with a few exceptions, utter garbage.

Just so I am clear here, I'm talking about the crappy, cheaply made pieces of plastic that games companies in the US and Europe try to pretend will enhance your games (and charge you silly money for the privilege). Almost all of them are just a waste of an injection mould makers talent. Look over your shoulder, look away to the East then squint a bit and you will see the very same companies releasing high quality, genuinely innovative games controllers that enhance your immersion into a game. Take for example the controller that Taito released for their Wii game 'Densha GO! Shinkansen EX Sanyou Shinkansen Hen'.

From just picking it up, you can feel it is a very high-quality piece of equipment. It has a good weight to it, which makes a lot of sense as it needs to stay put when you pull the handles that are built into it. They may be made of plastic but pull one towards you and it clicks very solidly through the brake or acceleration notches. Setting it up to play the game is as simple as plugging it into your Wii mote, just the same as you would the Wii Nunchuck. Booting the game brings the controller to life and really does help to put you into the driving seat of a 200mph, 400 meter long Bullet Train.

The Shinkansen controller allows the game to be played with far more finesse and accuracy — no more pushing nonsensical combinations of buttons on a joypad. If you want to go, you pull the accelerator and to stop you (obviously) pull the brakes. So simple, yet ultimately so very satisfying. Densha GO! Shinkansen EX Sanyou Shinkansen Hen may not be the best game in the world, but it does have by far the best custom controller of any of the Densha de Go! Series games — trust me, there are a lot of them. If you ever find one on your travels, you may not want to buy it as they are getting rather expensive now, but at least have a go on it and you'll see why we rate it so highly.

## LONGO TOOK KACK IN ANDER!



If like me you are naturally averse to joypads that require the user to have been born with three hands, and you are also not a fan of playing games on consoles that simulate the effects of cataracts, Doom 64 likely passed you by.

Back in 1997, Midways N64 exclusive sort of passed me by too, but for different reasons.

Hearing that the next Doom instalment was to be an exclusive on the still relatively new 64-bit Nintendo machine filled me with conflicting thoughts. On one hand, brilliant. A brand new Doom that's not just a port, and on a state of the art(ish) console—it's bound to be the next giant leap for Doom, with full 360

aiming, jumping, crouching and more.

On the other hand it's Nintendo so they'll probably replace the blood and hellish imagery with confetti and Yoshi statues or something.

Brimming with my usual segacity I was totally wrong in all respects.

The gore is just as graphic as previous instalments and the infernal medieval-esque decor is as present as ever, but the game made fewer giant leaps than Neil Armstrong has in the last eight years. So, being a fickle 16 year old, I played it for about an hour and got rid of it.

A big mistake as the game is excellent, if not revolutionary.

Doom 64 feels like a re-skin of the PS1/Saturn ports but with new levels. It has the same foreboding background sounds rather than the ripped

off thrash metal music from the PC original, and the same sound effects and dank lighting, which unlike the PC original gives the 90s console versions more of a fitting horror feel.

Like the previously mentioned ports there are missing enemies too — like the perpetually infuriating Arch vile. This is understandable as it has more frames of animation than any other enemy and brings other baddies back to life — this one Demon alone could melt the processor of any mid 90s console. But why no Spider Mastermind? Why no 'heavy weapon dude'? Why no Revenant?

We do have new enemies though and some small changes to existing ones.

There's a new kind of Imp that's only partially visible and throws faster projectiles.



The Arachnotron has twin plasma guns rather than one. The Barons of Hell now, rather than just being a skin deep pallet swap with the Hell Knights, throw red balls of energy and will in-fight with said Hell Knights and we have a new boss; a floating,

grotesque, succubine creature called Mother Demon that is reminiscent of the giant monster from the 80s horror movie 'The Gate'.

The biggest enemy change though has to be the Pain Elemental, it's practically unrecognisable. Yeah it's **Above and Below**: Screens from the recently remastered Doom 64 on the PC.

still a floating blob but that's where the aesthetic similarity ends, with strange hair like protrusions and two nonmoving skeletal hands. Not only that it fires two lost souls





at you a time instead of one, and as the cool down time between lost soul attacks has been reduced in Doom 64 the Pain Elemental can f\*ck your she\*t up faster than vindaloo ghost chillies.

Also there's little visual distinction between pistol and

**Below**: A screen from the original Doom 64 on the Nintendo 64.

shotgun zombies now so you just have to wait till you hear the bang before you know if you're going to need a new helmet or a new head.

The most significant change though is the new weapon, 'The Unmaker'. A weapon of underworld origin, inscribed with a pentagram and constructed from the spine and rib bones of a

demon, the Unmaker fires a powerful red beam. It is unique as it can be upgraded by collecting three very hard to find 'Demon Keys'.

Having no demon keys will cause the laser weapon to shoot relatively slowly; the first key increases the laser speed; the second key adds a second laser and the third key makes the weapon fire three

simultaneous lasers spread out horizontally, utterly devastating and surpassing even the BFG in most circumstances when fully upgraded.

Changes aside it's pretty much Doom by the numbers. Key hunting, map reading, secrets items, secret levels, toxic floors and intense, fast paced, strafe heavy fire fights. The level design is excellent but not quite up to the standard of the original Doom. It suffers from the Final





**Above**: The Editor's signed N64 cartridge from a recent Revival event that Mr Romero attended.

Doom problem of relying a tad too much on monster closets and invisible tripwires that teleport demons all around you, and for the first time in Doom, wall traps like spears and homing missiles (maybe the Revenants are hiding behind the wall).

The recent re-master for Windows, Switch, PS4 and XBOX One really elevates the game as it rectifies the two problems I mentioned and adds new elements.

You get to play a formerly N64 exclusive on modern consoles, which in itself is not a common occurrence, without having to be tri-ambidextrous, and the graphics are crystal clear and no longer suffer from a Jack the Ripper old 'London Town pea soup' aesthetic. Best of all there's even a brand new episode which links Doom 64 to the new Doom Eternal.

If you're not already a fan of Doom, firstly let me congratulate you on managing to live a relatively normal life after your lobotomy, and secondly Doom 64 Is four

measly quid, just go and download it now, go on.

**Below**: John Romero visiting Revival with a few fans for a photo moment — actually that is me on the left!



## **JOYSTICK**

# MAID LESS

Self confessed joystick addict and collector Colin Bell takes a look back at some more of the handheld classic 8-bit and 16-bit joysticks of yesteryear.



Oh the pain! Oh the agony! of bashing away at those hard plastic keys and wearing out your delicate

little digits. Well, all that could end if give in to the joy of a joystick! Yes, I'm back for another round of joystick madness and this time were talking hand held, no suckers here thank you very much!

So pull up a pew all you left and right handed gamers out there and let us once more take a look back at some of the hand held wagglers of yester year from the 'Ultimate in Joystick Design' to the downright pointless.

#### **A Quick Glance Inside**

8-bit & 16-bit Joysticks came mainly in three basic assembly types:

- 1: Pressure Pad Assembly Used in the earlier and lower end of the market joysticks, pressure pad sticks relied on a metal disc being pushed down to make contact and register a direction or button press. The problem with pressure pads however is durability and they tend to lose their feel after extended long term use.
- 2: Leaf Switch Assembly Again, found in the earlier and lower end of the market sticks, leaf switches relied on a small metal strip being pushed down onto another small metal strip or contact created by the movement of the joystick. Commonly used in early arcade machines, this type of switch gave a smoother more precise action however they lacked the positive on/off feel that came with micro switches.
- 3: Micro-switch Assembly Found in the later higher performance sticks, these small switches when pressed provided audible feedback, a click, resulting in a smoother more responsive feel. Far more durable and longer lasting than that of their predecessors.



#### KONIX – NAVIGATOR

6/10

#### YEAR OF RELEASE - 1989

The Navigator was the next evolution in hand held joystick design from Konix and was the natural successor to the mighty Speedking. With its new ergonomic phaser like design, which would look at home in the holster of any Star Trek crew member. The Navigator ensured a perfect fit for every hand promising minimum fatigue and maximum efficiency. Colour scheme wise it was available in a black and blue combo or a red and blue combo.



Fitted with nicely loud and responsive micro switches throughout there is one large trigger finger fire button that is perfectly positioned for your index finger which allows for super-fast firing reactions. The shaft is short and again made from those indestructible steel shafts that we keep hearing about and while it feels extremely responsive you won't be gripping this one with your full hand. Instead it's the delicate touch of your thumb, index and middle finger together that will be doing all the important waggling. The stick also centres immediately when let go.

With its pistol grip design it feels really nice to hold and its actually so light that after a while you almost forget its even in your hand. It also has the added bonus of fitting perfectly in either your left or right hand so ideal for the ambidextrous among you. The only very minor negative I could find with this stick was the old sweaty palms after prolonged use.

#### SUNCOM – STARFIGHTER

#### YEAR OF RELEASE -1987

Billed as 'The Ultimate Joystick' – No, honestly, it says so on the main body, the Star Fighter from Suncom was just one of many aftermarket joysticks aimed at the Atari 2600. Similar in shape and design to the classic Atari 2600 joystick, although marginally smaller and more compact, the Star Fighter nestles neatly and comfortably in your hand. It has no microswitches, using instead a metal ball that short-circuits contacts around the bottom shaft of the controller. Stick movement is minimal but sudden directional changes respond well and while

there's no indestructible steel shaft the stick still feels solid and robust.

The small lone fire button situated in the top left corner of the base isn't micro switched either but still proves to be nice and positive when pressed. The stick also features a much longer cable than that of the original Atari joystick which is no bad thing as those cables were ridiculously short. Only disadvantage with this stick is that it's purely designed with the right handed waggler in mind whereas lefties will sadly find this one a bit awkward thanks to the lack of a second fire button on the right hand top corner of the base.

Overall a neat little compact hand held stick that despite being created for the Atari 2600 after market will happily work with a variety of other 8-bit and 16-bit machines. And while it may not be as responsive as the more modern micro switched sticks the Star Fighter is sure to give you the edge on those classic space invader type shooters.

#### CHEETAH – BUG

#### YEAR OF RELEASE – 1990

Again, another stalwart classic that featured during our first round of madness. The Bug was Cheetahs first ergonomically designed joystick made specifically to fit in the palm of your hand.

With positive response micro switches throughout these awesome small sticks featured that 'indestructible' steel shaft which glided effortlessly in whichever direction you moved it and then automatically centered when let go. The bugs big eyes are the sticks two fire buttons located towards the front of the main body and are both responsive and within good reach of your index fingers. With contoured lines on the left, right and front of the sticks main body excellent grip is ensured even when it comes to sweaty palm time.

Initially released as an all-black coloured joystick the Bug was eventually released as a limited edition in a rather garish slime green with the bugs eyes made red in colour making it look and appear even angrier than the original. Yikes!

Still a firm favorite of gamers today including yours truly. Initially I thought gimmick but I couldn't have been more wrong with this one. The Bug is a well designed and well thought out stick that

nestles comfortably
in the palm of your
hand that quite
simply oozes
responsiveness
and control.
Have you caught
the Bug yet?

9/10

#### LOGIC 3 – STING-RAY

#### YEAR OF RELEASE - 1990

Sting-Ray, Sting-Ray, Da-de-dah-de-dah-de-dah. Sorry, couldn't resist. Sadly nothing to do with the classic Gerry Anderson puppet series of the same name, the Sting-Ray was actually the latest offering from Spectravideo, who were now under the new guise of Logic 3.

Very Similar in design to that of the Konix Navigator, but looking far more like the Sting-Ray submarine in shape rather than a star trek phaser, this little hand held beauty looks stylish with its strong blue plastic shell and short black 'unbreakable' steel shaft.

The micro switched trigger fire button is nice, loud and responsive and while it comes with an additional two small red 'thruster' fire buttons to the rear these feel completely unresponsive and awkward to reach with your thumb. The shaft, again like the Navigator, is too small to be fully gripped and requires a delicate touch. The stick does, like the trigger button, feel responsive, clicky and centres itself beautifully when let go.

While I found the stick fit neatly in my hand I couldn't help but feel someone with bigger hands may find it a tad cumbersome and unlike the Navigator or Phaser One which is perfectly balanced weight wise, the shape of the Sting-Ray with its elongated nose feels a little front heavy. The stick was available in two options, Standard and Autofire. A Sega Master System and NES version were also released, a trend that became common throughout the early 90s with most joystick manufacturers.

Overall, very light and felt good in the hand.

#### COMPETITION PRO 5000 - M.I.N.I

#### YEAR OF RELEASE – 1993

It looks like a Competition Pro, and indeed it is a Competition Pro one of the classic 5000 series no less. But hold on a minute, this one's a little different, a little smaller, in fact its half the size of a standard Pro? Yes, you've guessed it, it's the Competition Pro M.I.N.I.

Designed to fit snuggly in the palm of one hand, or at least I assume this is the reason for this stick as the box gives no indication whatsoever as to why a mini version of this stalwart classic was created or indeed what benefit it offers. In fact the box itself is identical to that of its bigger brother with the only difference being the word 'M.I.N.I' having been imprinted on the top right hand corner.

3/10

Spec wise it appears to be identical as well with a robust steel shaft, dual fire buttons for left and right handed players, guaranteed reliability using proven technology and super sensitive mini switches, instead of micro switches, for precision control.

Sadly however I feel this scaled down version of the much loved classic doesn't live up to expectations. The 'mini switches' are in no way as responsive as the larger micro switches and the shaft itself feels almost loose in comparison to the stiff shaft you'd normally expect from a Pro stick. The main body plastic looks and feels cheap and is incredibly smooth, so not ideal when it comes to sweaty palms time. And both fire buttons, while producing a satisfactory click, also have a loose feel too them. Not a fan of this one I'm afraid.

#### U.S. GOLD – PHASER ONE

#### YEAR OF RELEASE - 1986

Officially approved by software house U.S Gold, and as far I am aware the only joystick to ever be officially approved by any software house, the Phaser One from Welsh company Britannia is yet another 'Ultimate in Design' hand held joystick.

With its pistol grip design, the Phasor One is a standard black and red affair with nice loud clicky micro switches throughout, a great index finger trigger fire button and a lovely red and responsive shaft that centres itself when let go. It feels nice and sits perfectly in the hand, although again if you have rather large hands you may find this one not just as comfortable.

It's also a very well balanced stick weight wise with its square shaped main body evenly spread out across the front and back of your clenched hand. Body wise its very simple and certainly doesn't win any points for being stylish or particularly ergonomic but it does however have a rather nice black and red grid pattern sticker over the top of the body that feels and looks particularly 80s with the name Phaser One displayed in red towards the rear, but that's about it. One definite disadvantage of this little hand held waggler is the abysmally short cable that your given and I had to laugh at the box which states 'Extra-long cable for additional mobility'. Overall not as stylish as some of its main rivals but nonetheless still a quality robust hand held joystick with nice responsive controls and a well balanced feel.

#### KONIX – SPEEDKING

#### YEAR OF RELEASE - 1985

The Speedking by Konix is by far one of the best hand held joysticks ever produced. Developed and produced right here in the UK it was billed as the "Worlds first high-performance joystick" designed specifically to fit in the palm of your hand!

Now the picture on the outer box packaging would suggest that you must hold the Speedking while wearing a heavy duty leather motorcycle glove! And indeed, you may be forgiven for thinking that you have to hold it this way as it is shaped like an odd piece of jigsaw puzzle, but rest assured this sucker less little wonder sits neatly in the palm of your bare hand.

A quality product throughout it features a full micro switch assembly with one or two fire buttons and an auto fire switch depending on the model you go for. The micro switches are extremely responsive and allow you to hear and feel the position of the stick and fire buttons. The shorter, much thinner arcade style stick contains one of those "unbreakable" steel shafts which allows for short, fast precise movements. The fire buttons do take a little getting used to due to the odd positioning but you soon get the hang of it.

Konix even released a Nintendo NES and Sega Master System version of the stick which gave console gamers the chance to put down their control pads and have a little waggle time.

A redefining of the classic joystick, which is still enjoyed, loved and happily waggled by

many a retro gamer round the world today.

QUICKSHOT – CHIMERA I

YEAR OF RELEASE – 1992

The Chimera from Quickshot is an odd looking stick that combines the best points of a console control pad and that of a small thumb stick all in one neat tidy package. With its 'ergonomic new design' the Chimera was released for the Nintendo NES, Chimera 2 and for the Sega Megadrive, Chimera 3. What quite happened to the Chimera 1 remains a mystery and I've never personally come across or seen one.

The stick has a pistol grip hand held design but instead of the joystick, or thumb stick in this case, being located directly above the handle in the centre it is actually located off to the left hand side meaning you have to hold this stick like you would an NES or Megadrive control pad, with hands either side, your left thumb on the thumb stick and you right thumb on the fire buttons. As with all other pistol grip designs there is also a trigger fire button for your index finger.

Sadly for the buttons there are no micro switches present making them feel rather spongy and unresponsive. The thumb stick has no micro switches either but still maintains a rather slight yet satisfactory responsiveness when moving. In fact the thumb stick really is the star of the show here. Both Chimera's also feature a turbo fire button which surprisingly works rather well. The start and select buttons on both sticks however are a let down as you can't physically reach them with your fingers meaning you have to take a hand off the stick to press them.

An unusual stick this one, aimed at the console market rather than the home computer one.





READY TO PLAY. AGAIN.

# EVERCADE